

Sufficient Provision  
for Seekers of the  
Path of Truth  
(Al-Ahunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq)  
VOLUME FIVE



SHAIKH ‘ABD AL-QĀDIR AL-JĪLĀNĪ  
TRANSLATED FROM THE ARABIC BY MUHTAR HOLLAND

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# Sufficient Provision for Seekers of The Path of Truth

[*Al Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq*]

A COMPLETE RESOURCE ON THE INNER AND OUTER ASPECTS OF ISLAM

VOLUME FIVE

SHAIKH ʿABD AL-QĀDIR AL-JĪLĀNĪ

TRANSLATED FROM THE ARABIC BY MUHTAR HOLLAND



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*"He [Allāh] is the Truth."* Qur'ān (22:6)

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Using watercolor and wax to combine the beauty of Arabic script with the Qur'ānic message on paper, Italian artist Rohana Filippi has developed her own artistic style through personal research and inner inspiration. Her art is entirely devoted to "expressing Allāh's presence everywhere."

Ms. Filippi, who currently resides in Colombia, has lived and worked in Italy, England, Mexico, and the United States.

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for Seekers  
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[Al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Tarīq al-Ḥaqq]

VOLUME FIVE





بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*So remember Me,  
and I will remember you...  
(Qur'ān 2:152)*



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### Concerning the Modes of Conduct Proper to Spiritual Seekers [*Ādāb al-Murīdīn*]

Referring to those genuine spiritual paupers [*fuqarā'*] who follow the path of Ṣūfism [*ṭarīq aṣ-Ṣūfiyya*], meaning those who have come to be clear [*ṣafaw*] of the influence of whims and passions that lead astray, and who have forsaken immoral traits of character, so that they have entered the company of the spiritual deputies [*abdāl*] and the people of sainthood [*ahl al-wilāya*], and have acquired the distinctive attributes of essentiality [*ittaṣafū bi'l-ʿainiyya*].

(The subject is treated in summary and concise fashion,  
for fear of causing boredom and ennui.)



**Concerning the spiritual search [*irāda*],  
the seeker [*murīd*], and the one  
who is sought [*murād*].**

**A**s for the spiritual search [*irāda*], it entails the abandonment of the usual approach to life [*ʿāda*], and its actualization [*taḥqīq*] occurs through commitment of the heart to the quest for the Lord of Truth (Glory be to Him), and detachment from everything apart from Him. When the servant [of the Lord] forsakes the usual approach to life, which is concerned with the luxuries [*ḥuḏūz*] of this world and the hereafter, only then does his commitment to the spiritual search [*irāda*] become absolute.

The wish to seek [*irāda*] comes first and foremost. Then it is followed by the intention [*qaṣd*], and then by the action [*fiʿl*]. It is therefore the beginning of the path [*ṭarīq*] for every spiritual traveler [*sālik*], and the name of the first stage for every intentional seeker [*qāṣid*]. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) said to His Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

And do not drive away those who call upon their Lord at morning and evening, seeking His countenance. (6:52)	wa lā taṭrudi ʿlladhīna yadʿūna Rabba-hum biʿl-ghadāti wa ʿl-ʿashiyyi yuridūna Wajha-h.
---	--

He thus forbade His Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) to drive them away and keep them at a distance. Then, in another Qurʾānic verse [*āya*], He said (Exalted is He):

And keep yourself patient with those who cry unto their Lord at morning and evening, seeking His countenance, and do not let your eyes overlook them, seeking the pomp of the life of this world. (18:28)	wa ʿšbir nafsaka maʿa ʿlladhīna yadʿūna Rabba-hum biʿl-ghadāti wa ʿl-ʿashiyyi yuridūna Wajha-hu wa lā taʿdu ʿainā-ka ʿan-hu: turīdu zīnata ʿl-ḥayāti ʿd-dunyā.
---	--

Thus did He command His Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) to practice patience [*ṣabr*] with them, to stay with them, and to keep himself patient in their company. He also described them as “seeking His countenance.” Then He went on to say: “And do not let your eyes overlook them, seeking the pomp of the life of this world.” From this it is clear that the real meaning of the spiritual search [*ḥaḥiqat al-irāda*] is the search for the countenance of Allāh, and nothing else. That is the true beauty of life, in this world and the hereafter.

As for the seeker [*murīd*] and the one who is sought [*murād*], the seeker is someone who has all this within him, and who fits this description, so that he is always dedicated to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), engaged in worshipful obedience to Him, indifferent to anyone but Him, and responsive to no one but Him. He listens attentively to his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), so he acts in accordance with what is in the Book [of Allāh] and the Sunna [the exemplary practice of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace)], while he remains completely deaf to everything apart from that. He sees by the light of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), so he sees nothing but His action at work, on himself and on the rest of His creatures. He is blind to everything else, for he sees none other than Him (Almighty and Glorious is He) as an effective cause [*fāʿil*] in reality. He regards anything else as merely an instrument and a means [*sabab*], that is moved, managed, and put to use [by His action].

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

Your love of the thing makes you blind and deaf.

That is to say, it makes you blind and deaf to everything other than the thing you love, because of your total preoccupation with the object of your love.

The servant does not experience love until he becomes a seeker, and he does not become a seeker until his commitment to the search is absolute. His commitment to the search does not become absolute, until the firebrand of reverent awe [*jamrat al-khashya*] has been cast into his heart, and has burned everything it contains. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

Kings, when they enter a township,  
ruin it and make the noblest  
of its people the lowest. (27:34)

*inna 'l-mulūka idhā dakhālū  
qaryatan aḥṣadū-hā wa ja' alū  
a'izzata ahli-hā adhillā.*

A fit of love's ardor [*law' a*] dwarfs any fit of terror [*raw' a*], as the saying goes, so he must only sleep when slumber overwhelms him, eat out of dire necessity, and speak in extreme emergency. He must always admonish his lower self [*nafs*], and refuse to grant it the things it loves, and the worldly pleasures it craves. He must also give sincere advice to his fellow servants of Allāh, while he enjoys intimate converse with Allāh in private. He must be steadfast in refraining from all forms of disobedience to Allāh (Exalted is He). He must readily accept the verdict of Allāh, regard Allāh's commandment as the best, and feel a sense of shame under Allāh's scrutiny. He must devote every effort to promoting the causes that Allāh loves. He must always seize any opportunity that will connect him to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). He must be content with obscurity and absence from public view, for he must not try to attract the praise of his fellow servants of Allāh. He must endear himself to his Lord, through the frequent performance of supererogatory acts of worship [*nawāfil*], devoting himself sincerely to Allāh, so that he may attain to contact with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and join the company of the beloved friends [*aḥbāb*] of Allāh, and His seekers [*murīdī-hi*].

He will then be called a *murād* [one who is sought]. He will shed the burdens borne by the travelers on Allāh's path [*sālikī tariqī'llāh*], and bathe in the water of Allāh's merciful compassion, His gentle kindness, and His gracious favor. A house will be constructed for him in the vicinity of Allāh, and robes of honor of many kinds will be conferred upon him. This means nothing less than direct experience [*ma' rifa*] of Allāh, intimate friendship [*uns*] with Him, and peace and tranquillity in His presence.

He will utter the wisdom [*ḥikma*] of Allāh, and the secrets [*asrār*] of Allāh, after receiving explicit permission, or rather, direct communication [*khabar*] from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). He will be awarded some of the titles [*alqāb*] by which distinctions are conferred among Allāh's beloved friends, and so he will enter the special élite [*khawāṣṣ*] of Allāh. He will also be called by names known only to Allāh. He will be privy to secrets made accessible only to him, so he must not divulge them in the presence of anyone other than Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). He will hear from Allāh, see because of Allāh, speak because of Allāh, and strike with the strength of Allāh. He will strive

in obedience to Allāh, rely entirely on Allāh, and sleep in the company of obedience to Allāh. He will remember Allāh in the protection of Allāh, and in Allāh's safekeeping, for he will be one of Allāh's trusted agents [*umanā'*] and witnesses [*shuhadā'*], one of the mainstays [*awtād*] of His earth, and the savior [*munjī*] of His servants and His lands, His loved ones and His bosom friends [*akhillā'*].

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said, acting as a spokesman for Allāh (Exalted is He):

My believing servant continues to draw near to Me, through supererogatory acts of worship [*nawāfil*], until I love him; and when I love him, I become his hearing and his sight, and his tongue, and his hand and his foot, and his heart, so through Me he hears, through Me he sees, through Me he speaks, through Me he understands, and through Me he strikes.

The mind [*'aql*] of this servant is now controlled by the Supreme Intelligence, his instinctual movements have been subdued in the grasp of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), and his heart has become the treasure house of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). So this is the one who is sought by Allāh [*murādu'llāh*], if you wish to recognize him, O servant of Allāh!

According to some of our predecessors among the servants of Allāh (Exalted is He), the seeker [*murīd*] and the sought [*murād*] are one and the same, for if it were not the wish [*murād*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) that he should seek Him, he would not be a seeker [*murīd*]. Nothing comes into being, except what He wishes, because it is only when the Lord of Truth [*Ḥaqq*] wishes something in particular, that He causes it to be, in compliance with His wish [*irāda*].

Others have said: "The seeker [*murīd*] is the beginner, and the sought [*murād*] is the one who has reached the final stage."

"The seeker [*murīd*] is the one who is made to suffer the very essence of exhaustion, and is thrust into the hardest of hardships. As for the sought [*murād*], he is the one who goes about his business without any difficult problems."

"The seeker [*murīd*] is made tired and weary, while the sought [*murād*] is treated gently and made comfortable."

For those who deliberately set out [*qāṣidīn*], as beginners [*mubtadi'īn*], on the course prescribed by Allāh (Exalted is He), progress is therefore most likely to be made through strenuous efforts [*mujāhadāt*], supported



by the enabling guidance [*tawfiq*] of Allāh (Exalted is He). This will eventually lead them to Him, and to the unloading of their burdens. They will then obtain relief from many of their supererogatory duties [*nawāfil*], and from having to abstain from all pleasures. Their duty will be limited to the performance of the elements that are obligatory [*farā'id*] and customary [*sunan*], in all acts of worshipful service [*ibādāt*], and to the preservation of their hearts, observance of the rules, respect for the dignity of their station, and keeping their hearts detached from everything other than the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Their outer beings [*ẓawāhir*] will thus be with the creatures of Allāh (Exalted is He), while their inner beings [*bawāṭin*] are with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). Their tongues will be governed by Allāh's wise decree [*ḥukm*], and their hearts by the knowledge [*ilm*] of Allāh, since their tongues are for giving sound advice to Allāh's servants, while their innermost beings [*asrār*] are for the safekeeping of Allāh's deposits. They will henceforth enjoy the peace of Allāh, His greetings, His blessings, His mercy, and His salutation, as long as His earth and His heaven endure, and as long His servants practice obedience to Him, respect His right, and observe His rules.

When someone asked al-Junaid (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) about the seeker [*murīd*] and the sought [*murād*], he replied: "The seeker [*murīd*] is governed by the management of knowledge [*siyāsat al-ilm*], while the one who is sought [*murād*] is governed by the protective custody of the Truth [*Ḥaqq*], because the seeker [*murīd*] travels on the surface of the earth, while the sought [*murād*] flies through the air. When will the traveler [*sā'ir*] catch up with the flier [*ṭā'ir*]"

The difference becomes apparent through comparing Moses [*Mūsā*] and our own Prophet Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace). Moses (peace be upon him) was a seeker [*murīd*], while our Prophet Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace) was sought [*murād*]. The overland journey of Moses (peace be upon him) ended on Mount Sinai [*Ṭūr Sīnā'*], while the airborne journey of our Prophet Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace) ended at the Heavenly Throne [*Arsh*] and the Well-Kept Tablet [*al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūz*].

The seeker is in pursuit [*al-murīd ṭālib*], while the sought is being pursued [*al-murād maṭlūb*].

The service of the seeker is a strenuous effort [*‘ibādat al-murīd mujāhada*], while the service of the sought is a talent [*‘ibādat al-murād mawhiba*].

The seeker is existent [*al-murīd mawjūd*], while the sought is nonexistent [*al-murād fān*].

The seeker works with a particular purpose in view, while the sought does not notice the work, but only the enabling guidance [*tawfiq*] and gracious favors [of Allāh]. The seeker works to make progress along the path, while the sought stands at the junction of every road.

The seeker sees by the light of Allāh, while the sought sees because of Allāh.

The seeker stands up at Allāh’s command, while the sought stands up through the action of Allāh.

The seeker opposes his passion, while the sought is free from the influence of his self-will and his desires.

The seeker draws near, while the sought is drawn near.

The seeker is grim and stern, while the sought is playful, pampering, nurturing, and indulgent.

The seeker is protected, while the sought is entrusted with his protection.

The seeker [*murīd*] is in still in progress [*taraqqī*], while the sought [*murād*] has arrived and reached the Lord, who is the One who causes progress [*al-Muraqqī*], and he has obtained, in His presence, everything that is rare and precious, delicate and pure, and permissible to every servant who is obedient, worshipful, attentive, pious, and devoted to his duty.



## What is the fledgling *Ṣūfī* [*mutaṣawwif*], and what is the full-fledged *Ṣūfī*?

As for the fledgling *Ṣūfī* [*mutaṣawwif*], he is someone who has set himself the task of becoming a *Ṣūfī*, and who is prepared to work hard at becoming a *Ṣūfī*. Once he has committed himself, adopted the method of the *Ṣūfis* [*ṭarīq al-qawm*],<sup>1</sup> and made it his own, he is called a *mutaṣawwif*, just as someone who takes to wearing a *qamīṣ* [shirt] is called a *mutaqammiṣ*, and someone who takes to wearing a *durrāʿa* [loose outer garment with sleeves, slit in front] is called a *mutadarriʿ*.

By the same token, someone who embarks on the practice of *zuhd* [pious abstinence] is called a *mutazāhhid* [fledgling ascetic]. If he persists in his abstinence [*zuhd*], right through to the final stage, things will be made to hate him, and he will lose all interest in them, so each will forsake the other, and he will then be called a *zāhid* [full-fledged ascetic]. Once he has reached that stage, things will come to him, even though he does not wish to acquire them. Instead of hating them, however, he will simply obey Allāh's commandment concerning them, and wait to see what Allāh does with them. This explains the use, in a parallel context, of the terms *mutaṣawwif* [fledgling *Ṣūfī*] and *Ṣūfī* [full-fledged *Ṣūfī*].

The form of the word *Ṣūfī* corresponds to *fūʿila* [the pattern of one kind of passive verb, of which *fāʿala* is the active form], and it is derived from the same root as *muṣāfāh* [favorable treatment]. It therefore signifies a servant whom the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) has treated favorably [*ṣāfā*].

This also explains why, as someone put it: “The *Ṣūfī* is someone who is clear [*ṣāfī*] of the blights of the lower self [*naḥs*], devoid of its blameworthy characteristics, traveling to One whose ways are praiseworthy, adhering to the true realities [*ḥaqāʿiq*], and not relying with his heart on any mere creatures [*khalāʿiq*].”

<sup>1</sup> Literally, “the method of the people [of the Spiritual Path].”

The following sayings are also worthy of note:

“Şūfism [*taşawwuf*] means being truthful with the Truth [*Haqq*], and on your best behavior with His creatures [*khalq*].”

“As for the difference between the fledgling Şūfī [*mutaşawwif*] and the full-fledged Şūfī, the former is the novice, while the latter is the graduate.”

“The fledgling Şūfī [*mutaşawwif*] is the one who is just starting out on the road, while the full-fledged Şūfī is the one who has traveled the road, and arrived at the One who makes both the traveling and the arrival worthwhile.”

“The fledgling Şūfī [*mutaşawwif*] is a carrier [*mutaḥammil*], while the full-fledged Şūfī is carried [*maḥmūl*].”

The fledgling Şūfī [*mutaşawwif*] must carry every burden, both heavy and light, until his lower self [*nafs*] dissolves, his passion fades away, and his self-will and self-reliance are annihilated. He thus becomes pure [*şāfi*], and worthy to be called a Şūfī. He has finished carrying, so he now becomes the cargo of destiny [*maḥmūl al-qadar*], the polo-ball of the divine will [*kurat al-maḥiʿa*], the protégé of holiness [*murabbaʿ l-quḍs*], the fount of all kinds of knowledge and wisdom [*manbaʿ al-ʿulūm waʿl-ḥikam*], the house of safety and success [*bait al-amn waʿl-fawz*], the cave of the saints and the spiritual deputies [*kahf al-awliyāʿ waʿl-abdāl*], and their refuge, their resort, their breathing space, their place of rest and happy relaxation. For he is the gem of the necklace, the pearl of the crown, and the spyglass of the Lord.

As a fledgling Şūfī [*mutaşawwif*], the seeker [*murīd*] is still encumbered by his lower self [*nafs*], his passionate desire, his devil [*shaitān*], the creatures of his Lord, and his worldly and otherworldly interests. He is trying to serve his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), through detachment from his surroundings,<sup>2</sup> and from things, by refusing to act because of them, conform to their demands, and yield to their pressures, and through the purification [*taşfiya*] of his inner being [*bāṭin*], by ridding it of its inclination toward them, and its preoccupation with them.

He must therefore oppose his devil [*shaitān*], abandon his worldly interests, and part company with his cronies and all the other creatures of his Lord, at His behest (Almighty and Glorious is He), in order to pursue his interest in the hereafter. Then he must struggle with

<sup>2</sup> Literally, “from the six directions [before and behind, right and left, above and below].”

his lower self [*nafs*] and his passionate desire, at Allāh's command (Almighty and Glorious is He), until he achieves detachment from his interest in the hereafter, and that which Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has prepared therein for His saints [*awliyā'*], including the Garden of Paradise, because of his greater longing for his Master [*Mawlā*].

He will thus depart from all the created realms of being [*akwān*], for he will be purified [*yusaffā*] of all phenomena [*ahdāth*], and exist in his essential nature because of the Lord of humankind [*yatajawharu li-Rabb al-anām*]. He will experience detachment from all ties and secondary causes [*asbāb*], including family and children. All ordinary directions will be closed off from him, and the Direction of directions [*Jihat al-jihāt*] will be opened in his view, as will the Gate of gates [*Bāb al-abwāb*]. This is the state of contentment with the verdict of the Lord of humankind [*Rabb al-anām*] and the Lord of lords [*Rabb al-arbāb*]. It is the state in which he is operated by the action of the One who has full knowledge [*al-Ālim*] of what has been, and what is yet to come, the One who is fully Aware [*al-Khabīr*] of all things secret and hidden, of what motivates the limbs and organs of the body, and of what hearts and intentions conceal.

This gate will then open up toward him, a gate called the Gate of Nearness to the Sovereign [*al-Malik*], the Judge [*ad-Dayyān*]. Then he will be raised up from it to the sessions of intimate friendship [*majālis al-uns*]. Then he will be seated on the pedestal of the affirmation of Oneness [*tawhīd*]. Then the veils will be removed from him. He will enter the Abode of Uniqueness [*Dār al-Fardāniyya*], and Majesty [*Jalāl*] and Splendor [*ʿAzama*] will be revealed to him. As soon as his gaze alights on the Majesty and Splendor, he will be left without himself, extinct to his own person and his attributes, to his own power and strength, to his movements, his will, his desire, his interest in this world, and his interest in the hereafter.

He will come to resemble a crystal container, filled with pure water, in which only phantom shapes are visible, for nothing controls him, other than the divine decree [*qadar*], and nothing compels him, other than the divine command [*amr*]. He is extinct [*fān*] to himself and to his fortune [*ḥazz*], existing [*mawjūd*] only because of his Master [*Mawlā*] and His command. He does not seek privacy [*khalwa*], because privacy is only important to someone who exists [in this world]. He is like the infant who does not eat, until he is fed, and does not wear clothes, until

someone clothes him, for he is completely resigned and committed. [He is like those of whom Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:]

And we turned them over to the right,	<i>wa-nuqallibu-hum dhāta 'l-yamīni</i>
then over to the left,	<i>wa dhāta 'sh-shimāl:</i>
while their dog	<i>wa kalbu-hum</i>
was stretching out its paws	<i>bāsiṭun dhīrā' ai-hi</i>
on the threshold. (18:18)	<i>bi'l-waṣīd.</i>

Though he does still exist among creatures, in physical form, he is separate from them in their actions and deeds, their secret thoughts and external behavior, their consciences and their intentions.

Once he has reached this stage, he is rightly called a *Ṣūfī*, in the sense that he is kept in a state of purity [*yusaffā*], unsullied by the dirt of the created universe and the creatures it contains. If you wish, you may call him one of the spiritual deputies [*badal min al-abdāl*], one of the eminent individuals [*ain min al-a'yān*], someone who really knows [*ʿarīf*] himself and his Lord, the One who is the Reviver of the dead [*Muḥyi 'l-amwāt*], the One who rescues His saints [*awliyā'*] from the gloom and darkness of their lower selves [*nufūs*], their natural urges, passions and errors, and leads them to the courtyard of remembrance [*dhikr*], direct experiences [*ma'arīf*], all kinds of knowledge [*ulūm*], mysteries [*asrār*], and the light of nearness, and then to His own light (Almighty and Glorious is He), for:

Allāh is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as it were a shining star. [This lamp is] kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would almost glow forth [of itself] though no fire touched it. Light upon light. Allāh guides to His light whom He will. And Allāh speaks to mankind in allegories, for Allāh is Knower of all things. (24:35)	<i>Allāhu nūru 's-samāwāti wa 'l-arḍ: mathalu nūri-hi ka-mishkātīn fī-hā miṣbāh: al-miṣbāhu fī zujāja: az-zujājatu ka-anna-hā kawkabun durriyyun yūqadu min shajaratīn mubārakatīn zaitūnatīn lā sharqīyyatīn wa lā gharbiyyatīn yakādu zaitu-hā yuḍī'u wa law lam tamsas-hu nār: nūrun 'alā nūr: yahdī 'llāhu li-nūri-hi man yashā': wa yaḍribu 'llāhu 'l-amthāla li'n-nās: wa 'llāhu bi-kulli shai'in 'Alīm.</i>
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Allāh is the Protecting Friend of those who believe. He brings them out of the darkness into the light. (2:257)

*Allāhu Waliyyu 'lladhīna āmanū yukhrīju-hum mina 'z-zulumāti ila 'n-nūr.*

Allāh (Exalted is He) has thus undertaken to bring them out of the darkness into the light. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has made them aware of what the hearts of His servants conceal, and what their intentions involve, for my Lord has appointed them to be the spies [*jawāsiṣ*] of hearts, and the trustees [*umanāʿ*] of secrets and hidden thoughts. He has also granted them protection from their enemies, in private and public situations alike. No misleading devil [*shaitān*], and no passionate desire, can succeed in tempting them to make mistakes, for Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

As for My servants, you have no authority over them. (15:42)	<i>inna ʿibādi laisa la-ka ʿalai-him sulṭānun.</i>
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The Ṣūfī is neither controlled by a self that is always inciting to evil [*nafs ammāra biʿs-sūʿ*], nor dominated by a compelling lust, that would urge him to pursue destructive pleasures at the lowest levels, beyond the pale of the people of the Sunna and the orthodox communities [*jamāʿat*]. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

So it was, that We might turn evil and lewdness away from him; he was surely one of Our devoted servants. (12:24)	<i>ka-dhālika li-naṣrifa ʿan-hu ʿs-sūʿa wa ʿl-fahshāʿ: inna-hu min ʿibādi-na ʿl-mukhlaṣīn.</i>
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This means that my Lord has rendered them immune, and that He has curbed the stupid follies and addictions of their lower selves [*nufūs*], by the authority of Subjugating Power [*Jabarūt*]. He has thus established them in their spiritual degrees, and enabled them to fulfill the necessary requirement, just as He enabled them to fulfill the requirement of truthfulness [*ṣidq*] in the course of their journey, and of patience [*ṣabr*] at the stage of their isolation and dire need. They discharged the obligatory religious duties [*farāʿid*], observed the rules and the commandments, and steadfastly adhered to the degrees of spiritual progress, until they were rectified, corrected, purified, educated, cleansed, improved, enriched, augmented, encouraged and fortified, so they received the full benefit of Allāh's friendship and protection. As He has said (Exalted is He):

Allāh is the Protecting Friend of those who believe. (2:257)	<i>Allāhu Walīyyu ʿl-ladhīna āmanū yukhrijū-hum.</i>
And He befriends and protects the righteous. (7:196)	<i>wa Huwa yatawalla ʿṣ-ṣāliḥīn.</i>

From their various degrees of progress, they were transported toward the Owner of Sovereignty [*Mālik al-Mulk*], for He arranged that process for them in His presence. Their secret conversation [*najwā*] came to be a face-to-face encounter [*kifāh*], in which they confided in Him with their hearts and their innermost beings [*asrār*]. They made Him the sole focus of their attention, to the exclusion of everything apart from Him. They were banned from their own persons, and from every single thing, for He is the Lord and Master of everything whatsoever. He kept them within his grasp, bound them to their rational faculties, and appointed them to be His trusted agents [*umanāʿ*].

They are therefore safe within His grasp, His protective custody and His guardianship. They savor the fragrant scent of nearness, and live their lives in the amplitude of the affirmation of Oneness [*tawhīd*] and merciful compassion [*rahma*], for they are not concerned with anything, apart from whatever actions He permits them to undertake.

When the time comes for their bodies to be active, rather than their hearts, they must proceed to act with caution, to avoid the harmful influences exerted by their devils [*shayāṭīn*], their lower selves [*nufūs*], and their passionate desires [*ahwiya*]. Their actions will then be rendered safe, by denying the devils a chance to exploit the foibles of their lower selves [*nufūs*], such as ostentation [*riyāʿ*], hypocrisy [*nifāq*], vain conceit [*ʿujb*], the pursuit of worldly aims [*aghrād*], the idolatrous worship [*shirk*] of some created thing, and reliance on human power and strength [*ḥawl wa quwwa*].

They must regard all that as a gracious favor from Allāh. They must see it as an opportunity created by Allāh, and acquired by them through His enabling grace [*tawfiq*], so that they do not depart from the norms of right guidance [*sunan al-hudā*], after being confirmed in this belief [*ʿaqīda*]. Then, after fulfilling those commandments, and completing those undertakings, they will be returned to their spiritual stations, to which they have adhered in the meantime, and which they have maintained and preserved, with their hearts and their consciences.

Once they have been appointed trustees [*umanāʿ*], they may be assigned to a particular situation, and each of them will then be addressed individually, according to his situation.

You are today in Our presence,  
established and worthy of trust.  
(12:54)

*inna-ka 'l-yawma ladai-nā  
makīnun anīn.*



In dealing with their assignment, they will not need to seek permission, because they have come to be like those who are entrusted with the handling of their business, for they are held within His grasp, whatever course they may take in any of their affairs. This is confirmed by the saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), in which he relates, on the authority of Gabriel [*Jibrīl*] (peace be upon him), that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) declared:

My servant does not draw near to Me through anything comparable to My obligatory duties [*farā'id*]. He must surely draw near to Me, through supererogatory acts of worship [*nawāfil*], until I love him; and when I love him, I become his hearing and his sight, and his tongue, and his hand and his foot, and his heart, so through Me he hears, through Me he sees, through Me he speaks, through Me he understands, and through Me he strikes.

We have mentioned this traditional report [*khabar*] at several points in this book, because it is the basic text concerning this spiritual station. The heart of this servant must be filled with the love of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), with His light, with knowledge [*ilm*] of Him, and with direct awareness [*ma'rifa*] of Him, for it cannot otherwise be sound. Please consider the words of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

If anyone loves to see a man who loves Allāh with all his heart, let him look at Sālim, the freedman [*mawlā*] of Abū Ḥudhaifa (may Allāh be well pleased with him).<sup>3</sup>

He said this because that man's outer being [*ẓāhir*] was moved and operated by the action of Allāh (Exalted is He), while his inner being [*bāṭin*] was filled by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Moses [*Mūsā*] (peace be upon him) once said: "O my Lord, where must I seek, in order to find You?" His Lord replied: "O Moses, what house is big enough to contain Me? What place can support Me? If you wish to know where I am, I am in the heart of the abstainer [*tārik*], the one who says goodbye [to worldly attachments] [*wādi'*], the one who is truly virtuous [*'afīf*]."

<sup>3</sup> Abū 'Abdi'llāh Ḥudhaifa ibn al-Yamān al-'Abasī (may Allāh be well pleased with him and with his father) was among the earliest to embrace Islām, and he came to be one of the most distinguished of all the Companions of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace). He was famous for his dedication to an abstinent way of life. Together with Abū 'd-Dardā' and Abū Dharr (may Allāh be well pleased with them both), he was one of those Companions who were called *ṣāhib sirr an-Nabī*, because of the secret knowledge imparted to them by the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace). He died in A.H. 36.

The abstainer [*tārik*] is someone who abstains by making an effort, and in whom there is still a surviving remnant [of worldly attachment]. Then his Lord treats him graciously, so he says goodbye to it by dying to it. Then it is totally obliterated, so he pays attention to nothing apart from his Master [*Mawlā*]. Someone may well ask: “So what is the gracious favor that his Lord bestows upon him?” To this our reply will be: “It means that He (Almighty and Glorious is He) will establish him in the appropriate spiritual degree, with the stipulation of strict adherence to it, to ensure that he acts accordingly. Provided he fulfills the precondition, and does not attempt to act or function in any other way, but observes it strictly, and commits no transgression, He will then transport him from that degree, to reside in the Domain of Subjugating Power [*Mulk al-Jabarūt*]. He will thus subdue his lower self [*nafs*], and then tame it, by the authority of the Subjugating Power [*Jabarūt*], until it is rendered humble and submissive.

“Then He will transport him to the Domain of Authority [*Mulk as-Sulṭān*], so that he may go through basic training. He must be purged of those abscesses in his lower self [*nafs*], for they are the roots of those carnal desires, which have formed a solid tumor [*ghudda*] therein. Then He will transport him to the Domain of Majesty [*Mulk al-Jalāl*], so that he may receive an education. Then He will transport him to the Domain of Beauty [*Mulk al-Jamāl*], so that he may be inwardly purified. Then He will transport him to the Domain of Splendor [*Mulk al-‘Azama*], so that he may be outwardly cleansed. Then He will transport him to the Domain of Brilliance [*Mulk al-Bahā’*], so that he may be improved and refined. Then to the Domain of Resplendence [*Mulk al-Bahja*], so that he may be enriched. Then to the Domain of Reverence [*Mulk al-Haiba*], so that he may receive advanced instruction. Then to the Domain of Merciful Compassion [*Mulk ar-Rahma*], so that he may be mellowed, strengthened and encouraged. Then He will transport him to the Domain of Individuality [*Mulk al-Fardiyya*], so that he may be treated as a unique individual.

“Gentle kindness will nourish him. Tender care will surround him and embrace him. Loving affection will strengthen him. Ardent longing will draw him close, and yearning desire will impel him to move toward Him. The All-Generous and All-Glorious One [*al-Jawād al-‘Azīz*]

will transform him and draw him near. Then He will accelerate his approach. Then He will slow him down. Then He will train him. Then He will converse with him in confidence. Then He will bestow His grace upon him in abundance. Then He will tighten His grip upon him.

“Wherever he happens to be, in every empty space, and in every circumstance, he will be close to his Lord, for he is held within His grasp, as one of those entrusted with His secrets, and with what he must convey from his Lord to His creatures. Once he has reached this stage, descriptions fail, and words and expressions are no longer adequate, for this is the farthest point accessible to minds and hearts, and the extreme limit attained by the spiritual states of the saints [*awliyāʿ*]. Whatever exists beyond that is reserved for the Prophets [*Anbiyāʿ*] and Messengers [*Rusul*] (peace be upon them all), because the final stage of the saint [*walī*] is the starting point of the Prophet [*Nabī*]. Upon all be the blessings of Allāh, His salutations, His gentle kindness and His merciful compassion!

“The difference between Prophethood [*Nubuwwa*] and sainthood [*wilāya*] is as follows: The rôle of the Prophet is to deliver speech [*kalām*] that emanates from Allāh (Exalted is He), and to receive and transmit revelation [*wahy*]. This is accompanied by a Spirit [*Rūḥ*] from Allāh, for when He decrees the revelation [*wahy*], He stamps it with the seal of the Spirit. It is received from Him (Exalted is He), so it must be accepted. It is that which must be believed, and whoever rejects it is an unbeliever [*kāfir*], because he is rejecting the Speech of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

“As for sainthood [*wilāya*], it is the office of one to whom Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has entrusted His explanatory narrative [*ḥadīth*], by way of inspiration [*ilhām*]. He conveys it to the saint, who is thereby charged with its transmission. That narrative [*ḥadīth*] emanates from Allāh on the tongue of the Truth [*Ḥaqq*], accompanied by the state of pure serenity [*sakīna*]. It is thus received by the state of pure serenity [*sakīna*] within the heart of the ecstatic [*majdhūb*], so he accepts it, and relies upon its veracity.

“The Speech [of Allāh] is therefore the prerogative of the Prophets [*Anbiyāʿ*], while the explanatory narrative [*ḥadīth*] is the prerogative of the saints [*awliyāʿ*]. If someone rejects the Speech [of Allāh], he is an

unbeliever [*kāfir*], because he refuses to accept His ability to speak and communicate His revelation [*wahy*]. On the other hand, if someone rejects the explanatory narrative [*ḥadīth*], he is not guilty of unbelief, though he will not go unpunished. He will suffer serious disappointment, and experience dreadful consequences, and his heart will be sorely perplexed, because he has rejected the Truth [*Ḥaqq*], which came to him with the loving affection of Allāh, from one who carried the knowledge of Allāh within him, for He had entrusted him with the Truth, and caused him to instill it in his heart.

“The explanatory narrative [*ḥadīth*] is a manifestation of His knowledge, which emerges at the moment determined by His will, so it is experienced as a personal communication, like a secret confidence. That explanatory narrative [*ḥadīth*] is only conveyed through Allāh’s loving affection for His servant, so it reaches his heart together with the Truth, and his heart accepts it in the state of pure serenity [*sakīna*].”



**Concerning (1) what is required of the beginner  
on this Spiritual Path [*Ṭarīqa*], at the very outset,  
(2) his conduct with the Shaikh, and (3) what is  
required of the Shaikh in training  
the seeker [*murīd*].**

**W**hat is required of the beginner on this Spiritual Path [*Ṭarīqa*], at the very outset, is the sound belief that constitutes its foundation. His belief must be based on the doctrine [*‘aqīda*] of our pious predecessors, the people of the ancient tradition, the Tradition [*Sunna*] of the Prophets [*Anbiyā’*] and the Messengers [*Mursalīn*], the Companions [*Ṣaḥāba*] and the Successors [*Tābi‘īn*], the saints [*awliyā’*] and the champions of truth [*ṣiddīqīn*], as we have mentioned and explained elsewhere in this book.

He must therefore adhere to the Book [of Allāh] and the Sunna, and observe them both in practice, root and branch, respecting every commandment and prohibition. He must make them his wings, with which to fly along the road that leads to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). Then he must practice truthfulness [*ṣidq*], and then exercise good judgment [*ijtihād*], until he finds the guidance [*hidāya*] and direction [*irshād*] he needs, and the signpost [*dalīl*], and a leader [*qā’id*] to lead him. Then he must find a close friend [*mu’nis*], who will keep him company. He must also find a refuge to which he can resort, when he is in a state of exhaustion, fatigue and gloom, due to the eruption of his carnal appetites and lusts, the foibles of his lower self [*nafs*], his misleading passion, and his natural constitution, with its propensity to cowardice, and its reluctance to embark on traveling the road. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

As for those who strive in Our cause,  
surely We shall guide them  
to Our paths. (29:69)

*wa ’llādhīna jāhadū fi-nā  
la-nahdiyanna-hum  
subula-nā.*

As the wise man said: “He who seeks, and makes a serious effort, will surely find [*man ṭalaba wa jadda wajada*].”

Through firm belief [*i‘tiqād*], he will obtain the knowledge of Reality [*‘ilm al-Ḥaqqīqa*], and through the exercise of good judgment [*ijtihād*], he will acquire the attitude and conduct appropriate to Reality [*sulūk al-Ḥaqqīqa*]. He will then be required to make a sincere covenant with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), promising that he will neither lift a foot, nor set one down, on the path toward Him, except because of Allāh, as long as he has not yet reached Allāh. He must not turn aside from his commitment, for any blameworthy purpose, because the truthful person [*ṣādiq*] never goes back on his promise. Even if he is offered a charismatic gift of grace [*karāma*], along the way, he must not stop to accept it, as a substitute for Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), since it represents an obstacle to his progress toward his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Once he has reached his destination, charismatic talents [*karāmāt*] will do him no harm, since they are automatically conferred at the gate of empowerment [*qudra*], as the fruits and tokens thereof. This is not something that violates his integrity. How could it be, indeed, when he has now become an exemplary figure [*qudwa*] in the land, an extraordinary exception to the general rule [*kharq al-‘āda*]? His speech has developed into wisdom [*ḥikma*], in the wake of ignorance, barbarism [*‘ujma*], stupidity and inaccuracy. His movements and his pauses, and all his ways of doing business, have come to be a model for those who take note of them. The actions of Allāh are at work within him and upon him, in ways that dazzle people’s minds.

Having reached this stage, he will be commanded to seek charismatic grace [*karāma*], and compelled to do so. He will be made to realize that his ruin and destruction lie in failing to seek it, and in refusing to obey this commandment. He will be made to realize that everything is contingent on his seeking it, and on his compliance with his Lord’s command—his permanence, his survival, his worshipful service, his good work, the approval of his Lord and his closeness to Him, and increase in the loving affection bestowed upon him by his Lord. How can charismatic talent [*karāma*] do him any harm, now that he has this relationship with his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He)?

He must not reveal this special relationship to any of the common people [*awāmm*], unless its disclosure is demanded of him irresistibly, because one of the conditions of sainthood [*wilāya*] is the concealment of charismatic talents [*karāmāt*], whereas one of the conditions of Prophethood [*Nubuwwa*] is the manifestation of miracles [*mu'jizāt*].<sup>4</sup> It is incumbent upon him to emphasize this distinction between Prophethood [*Nubuwwa*] and sainthood [*wilāya*].

He must not linger in neighborhoods where misconduct is rife, nor must he mingle with dissolute types and idle layabouts, the sons of tittle-tattle [*qāl wa qāl*], the enemies of good works and responsibilities, those who lay false claim to Islām and faith [*īmān*], those whom Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) was addressing when He said:

O you who believe, why do you say that which you do not do? It is most hateful in the sight of Allāh that you say what you do not do. (61:2)	<i>yā ayyuha 'lladhīna āmanū li-ma taqūlūna mā lā taf' alūn: kabura maqātan 'inda 'llāhi an taqūlū mā lā taf' alūn.</i>
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Will you bid other people to righteousness, while you forget [to practice it] yourselves? And you are readers of the Book! Have you no sense at all? (2:44)	<i>a-ta' murūna 'n-nāsa bi'l-birri wa tansawna anfusa-kum wa antum tailūna 'l-Kitāb: a-fa-lā ta' qilūn.</i>
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He must not begrudge spending his available resources, nor must he be stingy with anything he has at his disposal, for fear that he may receive the same treatment, when it comes to the *iftār* [the fast-breaking meal] and the *saḥūr* [the last meal before daybreak in the month of Ramaḍān]. He must impress upon his lower self [*nafs*], and instill in his heart, an awareness of the fact that Allāh has never once created a saint [*walī*] of His, in all the times gone by, who was stingy about spending available resources.

He is obliged to be content with permanent humiliation, unfortunate deprivation, constant hunger, lack of recognition, criticism from other people, and seeing his peers, his counterparts and his contemporaries receive priority over him, in the bestowal of honors and gifts, and in the presence of the Shaikhs and the sessions of the scholars [*'ulamā'*]. He must be ready to go hungry, while the others present eat their fill, and all of them enjoy respect. He must accept humiliation as his lot, while all the others bask in glory. He must actually prefer humiliation, and

<sup>4</sup> See n. 57 on p. 127 below.

regard it as his foreordained condition. If anyone is not content with this, and cannot reconcile himself to it, he is most unlikely to receive any benefit from it, since complete progress and success can only be achieved through what we have described.

He must not expect Allāh to grant him any request, apart from forgiveness for previous sins, pardon for disobedience in the times that lie ahead, and help [*tawfiq*] in observing the hours that He loves, and in performing the good deeds that will bring him into His presence.

Such is the course he must follow, in order to obtain His approval in all his comings and goings, and to endear himself to those Shaikhs who are among the saints [*awliyā'*] and the spiritual deputies [*abdāl*], since that is his means of entry into the company of the beloved friends [*aḥbāb*], the people endowed with faculties of reason and understanding [*dhawi 'l-'uqūl wa 'l-albāb*], who have learned from the Lord of lords [*Rabb al-arbāb*], who have recognized the warnings and the signs [*āyāt*], and who have thus become pure in their hearts, their consciences and their intentions [*niyyāt*].

The description we have given is that which fits the seeker [*murīd*]. As long as his heart is not absolutely clear of all wishes and desires, and purged of all the other factors we have mentioned, such as needs and demands, he cannot be a seeker [*murīd*] in the true sense of the term.





## Concerning the modes of behavior [*ādāb*] required of the seeker [*murīd*] in relation to the Shaikh.

As for the modes of behavior [*ādāb*] required of the seeker [*murīd*] in relation to the Shaikh, it is incumbent upon him to refrain from disagreement with his Shaikh in the external sphere [*ẓāhir*], and to abstain from opposition to him in the internal domain [*bāṭin*]. If he is guilty of flagrant insubordination, he is forsaking his proper conduct [*adab*], and if he is guilty of rebellion in his innermost being [*sirr*], he is heading toward his destruction.

Far from adopting such negative attitudes, he must always play the part of an advocate for his Shaikh, against his own lower self [*nafs*]. He must restrain his lower self, and prevent it from opposing him, both outwardly and inwardly, while frequently reciting the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

[They say:] “Our Lord, forgive us  
and our brothers who were before us  
in the faith,  
and do not lodge in our hearts  
any rancor toward those who believe.  
Our Lord, You are All-Gentle,  
All-Compassionate.” (59:10)

*Rabba-na 'ghfir la-nā  
wa li-ikhwāni-na 'lladhīna  
sabaqū-nā bi'l-īmāni  
wa lā taj' al fī qulūbi-nā  
ghilla 'lladhīna āmanū:  
Rabba-nā inna-ka Ra'ūfun  
Raḥīm.*

If the Shaikh does something that strikes him as incompatible with the sacred law [*shar'*], he must ask him about it obliquely, by means of analogy and symbolic expression. He must not state his concern in blunt and explicit terms, since that might alienate him. If he notices some kind of fault in his Shaikh, he must overlook it, and turn the suspicion upon himself. He must try to interpret the sacred law [*shar'*] in the Shaikh's favor. Then, if he can find no valid excuse for him in the sacred law [*shar'*], he must seek forgiveness on behalf of the Shaikh, and invoke upon him the blessings of enabling grace [*tawfiq*], true knowledge [*'ilm*], conscious awareness [*tayaqquḏ*], impeccable virtue

[*ʿiṣma*], and zealous commitment [*ḥamiyya*]. He must not believe that he possesses impeccable virtue [*ʿiṣma*], and he must not tell anyone about this experience.

If he goes back to him later, on another day, or at another hour, he must do so in the firm belief that this is a thing of the past, and that the Shaikh has now been transported to a higher spiritual degree. He must be convinced that his previous condition was not permanent, but merely a temporary lapse, a minor incident, and an interlude between two spiritual states. There is always an interlude between two spiritual states, marked by a reversion to the special dispensations [*rukhaṣ*] and permissive license [*ibāḥa*] of the sacred law [*sharʿ*], and by a respite from the strict interpretation [*ʿaẓīma*] and its most rigorous application. This resembles the corridor between two houses, and the intermediate grade between two ranks. It signals an end to the first situation, and a step onto the threshold of the second situation, a transfer from one degree of sainthood [*wilāya*] to another, the discarding of the robe of honor of one degree of sainthood, and the donning of the robe of honor of another degree of sainthood, which is loftier and more noble. This is an ongoing process, because every day they experience an increase in closeness to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

If the Shaikh gets angry, and frowns in his face, or seems to be avoiding him, he must not sever his connection with him. He must rather scrutinize his own inner being [*bāṭin*], and examine any misconduct in relation to the Shaikh, or negligence in relation to the commandment of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), such as failure to obey His commandment, and violation of His prohibition. He must first seek forgiveness from his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), turn to Him in repentance, and resolve to abstain from repeating his offense. Then he must apologize to the Shaikh, humble himself before him, treat him with affection, and endear himself to him by refraining from opposition to him in the future.

He must always be on good terms with his Shaikh, and persist in maintaining that relationship, for he has accepted him as a link and a mediator between himself and his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and as a method and means by which to attain to Him. His situation resembles that of someone seeking admission to the presence of a king, with whom he has no personal familiarity. He has no alternative to

approaching one of the king's chamberlains, or one of his courtiers and favorites, who can help him to understand the king's policy, practice and custom. From such an insider, he can learn how to behave in the king's presence, and how to address him. He can obtain all kinds of useful guidance, and acquire some curious bits of information, quite unlike anything in his existing store of knowledge, to which they will prove a valuable supplement, for he must enter the royal chamber through its proper door, and not climb in through some back passage. A wrong approach would expose him to blame and contempt, and defeat his aim and purpose in seeking an audience with the king.

Every newcomer [to the Spiritual Path] is bound to experience some bewilderment, so he needs to be treated with consideration and goodwill. He needs to have someone take him by the hand, and seat him in a place like his own, or at least beckon him to come and sit down, so that he does not feel unwelcome. He must not be greeted with bad manners and stupid behavior. He must be assured that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has caused it to be the normal state of affairs, on this earth, for there to be a Shaikh and a seeker [*murīd*], an escort and one who is escorted, a follower and one who is followed, from the time of Adam till the advent of the Final Hour [*as-Sāʿa*].

Let us consider the case of Adam (peace be upon him). When Allāh (Exalted is He) created him, He taught him to recognize all things, and so He began the whole business with him, for He treated him like a pupil [*tilmīdh*] in the company of his master [*ustādh*], and like a seeker [*murīd*] in the company of his Shaikh. "O Adam," He told him, "this is a horse, this is a mule, and this is a donkey..." until He had taught him to identify every jot and tittle.<sup>5</sup> Then, when He had taught him and trained him, He made him a master [*ustādh*], a teacher [*muʿallim*], a Shaikh and a wise man [*ḥakīm*]. He clothed him in all kinds of garments and adornments, and crowned him with a jeweled headband. He seated him on a pedestal in the Garden of Paradise, and stationed the angels around him in rows, then He said:

"O Adam, inform them  
of their names." (2:33)

ya Ādamu anbiʿ-ḥum  
bi-asmāʾi-him.

—[meaning:] "now that their incompetence and their lack of knowledge

<sup>5</sup> Literally, "a large bowl [*qasʿa*] and a small bowl [*quṣaiʿa*]."

have become apparent to you, and you have heard them say:

‘Glory be to You!	<i>subhāna-ka</i>
We have no knowledge except that	<i>lā ‘ilma la-nā</i>
which You have taught us.” (2:32)	<i>illā mā ‘allamta-nā.</i>

The angels thus became pupils [*talāmīdh*] to Adam, and Adam became their Shaikh, for he taught them the names of all things, in the manner to which the Qurʾān bears witness. His superior status (peace be upon him) was thereby made manifest, and so he became the most excellent and the noblest of them all, in the sight of Allāh and in their sight. He became their leader, and they became followers, guided by a leader (may Allāh’s blessings be upon them all). But then, when it all happened—the eating from the tree, the expulsion from the Garden of Paradise, and the transition to another situation and another abode—it caught him unawares, and he was not yet equipped to understand it. That did not occur to his mind, and he did not imagine that it would happen to him.

Then, when Adam reached his new abode, and roamed about the earth, he found it strange and alarming. He experienced things there that he had never experienced before. He was made to suffer hunger and thirst, and scorching heat, and constriction, none of which he had previously encountered. He needed a teacher, a director, a master, a guide, a trainer, and an instructor, so Allāh (Exalted is He) sent Gabriel [*Jibrīl*] (peace be upon him), who befriended him, and helped him to understand what he found difficult about the situation. He gave him some wheat, and told him what to do with it, so he sowed it. Then he told him what to do next, so he harvested it. Then he told him what to do next, so he winnowed it, and ground it. He also prepared instruments for him to use. Then he told him to bake bread, so he baked it. Then he told him to eat, so he ate. Then, when the food was trying to leave his stomach, Adam was confused, and did not know what to do. He needed a teacher once again, so Gabriel taught him how to evacuate his bowels, how to clean himself, and how to serve Allāh (Exalted is He) in the situation. He taught him how to restore the white complexion to his body, the color of which had turned from white and fair to black and dark. He ordered him to fast on the white days [*al-ayyām al-bīd*],<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> According to the classical Arabic lexicographers, *al-ayyām al-bīd* [the white days]—like the even shorter expression *al-bīd* [the white ones]—is simply an abbreviated way of referring to *ayyām al-layālī ‘l-bīd* [the days of the white nights]. They are so called because they are brightly illuminated throughout by the moon, which is then at or near the full. (For traditional reports on the subject, see Vol. 3, pp. 357–60.)

which occur on the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth of the month, and his color was thus restored to whiteness. He also taught him many other forms of knowledge [*‘ulūm*], and various modes of good conduct [*‘ādāb*].

Adam (peace be upon him) thus became a pupil to Gabriel, and Gabriel (peace be upon him) became his master and his Shaikh, after Adam had been his Shaikh, and the Shaikh and leader of all the angels, and more knowledgeable than any of them. All that was due to the change in his spiritual state, and the transition from one situation to another.

The story then continues through the ages. Seth [*Shūth*], the son of Adam, learned from his father, Adam, then his sons from him. The Prophet Noah [*Nūḥ an-Nabī*] (peace be upon him) likewise taught his sons, and Abraham [*Ibrāhīm*] (peace be upon him) taught his sons. Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

The same did Abraham enjoin  
upon his sons, and also Jacob.  
(2:132)

*wa waṣā bi-hā Ibrāhīmu  
banī-hi wa Ya‘qūb.*

In other words, he instructed them and taught them.

Moses [*Mūsā*] and Aaron [*Hārūn*] (peace be upon them both) likewise taught their own sons, and all the children of Israel [*banī Isrā‘īl*]. Jesus [*‘Īsā*] (peace be upon him) taught the Disciples [*Ḥawāriyyīn*]. Then Gabriel [*Jibrīl*] (peace be upon him) taught our Prophet [Muḥammad] (Allāh bless him and give him peace) how to perform the ritual ablution [*wuḍū’*] and the ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*], and advised him to use the toothpick [*siwāk*]. As he once said (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

Gabriel (peace be upon him) advised me to use the toothpick [*siwāk*], almost to the point of making it an obligatory religious duty. Gabriel (peace be upon him) led me in the performance of the ritual prayer [*ṣallā bi*], beside the House [the House of Allāh; the Ka‘ba], on two occasions. On the first occasion, he led me in the ritual prayer of noon [*zuḥr*], when the sun had declined from the meridian....

(We have previously quoted this tradition [*ḥadīth*] in full.)<sup>7</sup>

Then the Companions [*Ṣaḥāba*] (may Allāh be well pleased with them) learned from the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), then the Successors [*Tābi‘ūn*] learned from them, then the successors of the Successors [*tābi‘ū t-Tābi‘īn*] learned from them, century after century, and epoch after epoch.

<sup>7</sup> See Vol. 4, p. 114.

There has never been a Prophet [*Nabī*] who did not have a Companion [*Ṣāhib*], who was guided by his guidance, emulated his example, followed in his footsteps, and took direction from him, then eventually succeeded him and deputized for him. In the case of Moses [*Mūsā*] the son of ‘Imrān, for example, there was his servant, who was also his sister’s son, Yūsha‘ ibn Nūn (peace be upon him).<sup>8</sup> Jesus [*‘Īsā*] had his Disciples [*Hawāriyyūn*]. With our own Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) came Abū Bakr and ‘Umar (may Allāh be well pleased with them both), as well as ‘Uthman, ‘Alī, and the rest of the Companions [*Ṣaḥāba*] (may Allāh be well pleased with them all).

The master-and-pupil sequence continued without a break, through the saints [*awliyā’*], the champions of truth [*ṣiddīqūn*], and the spiritual deputies [*abdāl*]. There was al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, for instance, and his pupil ‘Utbat al-Ghulām.<sup>9</sup> Then there was Sarī as-Saqāṭī and his servant, who was also his sister’s son, Abū Qāsim al-Junaid. There have been many more, but it would take too long to list them all.

The Shaikhs are the road to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), the signposts to it, and the gate by which it is entered. For every seeker [*mūrīd*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), a Shaikh is therefore indispensable, as we have explained. It is true that there are some rare exceptions, though very few and far between, since it is possible for Allāh to select one of His servants, and then take direct charge of his training and education, while providing him with protection from the Devil [*ash-Shaitān*], the foibles of the lower self [*nafs*], and passionate desire. Examples include the Prophet Abraham [*Ibrāhīm an-Nabī*] and our own Prophet [Muḥammad] (may the blessings and peace of Allāh be upon them both), as well as Uwais al-Qaranī<sup>10</sup> and others among the

<sup>8</sup> Although not mentioned by name in the Qur’ān, Yūsha‘ ibn Nūn is identified by some Islāmic authorities as the servant referred to in Sūra 18:60: “And when Moses said to his servant: ‘I will not give up until I reach the point where the two oceans meet, though I march on for ages.’”

<sup>9</sup> Abū ‘Abdillāh ‘Utba ibn Abbān ibn Sam’a (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him), a celebrated ascetic of Baṣra, was nicknamed ‘Utbat al-Ghulām because he was a servant [*ghulām*], not because he was a young man (another meaning of *ghulām*). His death in A.H. 153 preceded that of his own father. He was noted for his state of profound sorrow [*huzn*], which has been compared to that of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him).

<sup>10</sup> Like the Companions (may Allāh be well pleased with them all), Uwais al-Qaranī was a contemporary of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), but he lived in Yemen, far from Mecca and Medina, and never met him in the flesh. He is regarded as a spiritual Companion, however, because he received a visit from the spirit of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), after which he went on to become one of the greatest saints of the early Islāmic community. So, may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him, and may He be well pleased with him!

saints [*awliyāʿ*] (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon them all), so the possibility is undeniable.

The fact remains, nevertheless, that what we have described is by far the most probable and most frequent scenario, and the safest and best course to pursue. This means that the seeker should not part company with the Shaikh, until, through attaining to his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), he achieves independence from him. From that point on, He (Blessed and Exalted is He) will take charge of his education and his training, and He will enable him to grasp the meanings of things that were hidden from the Shaikh. He will put him to work in whatever undertakings He may wish. He will tell him what he must do, and what he must not do. He will sometimes treat him expansively, and sometimes subject him to constriction. He will sometimes enrich him, and sometimes make him experience poverty. He will instruct him, and make him aware of his allotted portions [*aqṣām*], and of what will eventually become of his business.

He will thus be dependent on his Lord, and independent of all others. Indeed, he will have no time to spare for anyone else. It will be impossible for him to attend to anything, except his duty and service to his Lord, and the preservation of his respectful and reverent demeanor toward Him. Once he has reached this stage, he will be completely cut off from the Shaikh. He may even be forbidden to contact the Shaikh, unless he receives a clear and explicit instruction to do so, or unless the Shaikh happens to approach him, or he meets him on the road, or in a congregational mosque [*jāmiʿ*], by a decree of destiny [*qadar*], not by deliberate intent.

The purpose of all that is to keep the spiritual state intact. It is necessary to maintain absolute dependence on the Lord, the zealous preservation of the spiritual state, and constant adherence thereto. It is also a precaution against lapsing into error, and suffering the punishment that would ensue.

The main point here is that the rule of conduct [*ḥukm*] applies to both the seeker [*murīd*] and the Shaikh, and embraces them both, whereas the spiritual states [*aḥwāl*] distinguish between them, because those states are decreed by destiny [*qadar*], and destiny is mysterious [*ghaib*], for it is the action of the Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Every day,

Allāh (Exalted is He) is about some awesome business, involving advancement and postponement, substitution and alteration, appointment and dismissal, enrichment and impoverishment, ennoblement and abasement, as He brings the decrees of destiny [*maqādir*] to their appointed times [*mawāqīt*]. None of that is within the comprehension or control of any of His creatures. It is a dark night, a fathomless ocean, and a vast continent. No part of it is accessible to anyone but Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and those whom Allāh (Exalted is He) has made privy to it, they being His Messengers [*Rusul*], His Prophets [*Anbiyā'*], and the chosen few among His saints [*awliyā'*].

This means that two of the saints [*awliyā'*] will not find themselves on the same path, after each has embarked on the one assigned by destiny [*qadar*] and the action [of the Lord]. So what has the seeker [*murīd*] to do with the Shaikh, once their paths are different? The Shaikh will be moved in one direction, and the seeker [*murīd*] in another, so their backs and their faces will be at odds. What chance is there, then, of companionship, togetherness, and harmony between them? That is very unlikely indeed. If it ever does occur, it is extremely rare and extraordinary, so it need not be considered or treated as a serious possibility, since the most probable scenario is that which is obvious, plainly visible, and clearly apparent.

May Allāh's blessings therefore be upon the Shaikh, and upon the truthful seeker [*al-murīd aṣ-ṣādiq*], who has attained, with his help, to a spiritual state in which he depends entirely on his Lord (Blessed and Exalted is He), and has nothing more to do with the Shaikh, except when the time is right.





## More concerning the proper conduct [*adab*] of the seeker [*murīd*] in relation to the Shaikh.

He must not talk in the presence of his Shaikh, except in a case of emergency, and he must not draw attention to any of his personal virtues and exploits [*manāqib*] in his presence.

He must not spread his prayer rug [*sajjāda*] in front of the Shaikh, except at the time of performing the ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*]. Then, as soon as he has completed his ritual prayer, he must roll up his prayer rug immediately, and be ready to serve his Shaikh. If someone remains seated on his carpet [*bisāt*], comfortably ensconced and relaxed, he is under no such obligation to others, for this is the state of the Shaikhs, not the state of the seekers [*murīdīn*].

He must try to avoid spreading his prayer rug on top of the rug of someone who is above him in rank, or even setting it close to that person's rug, except at his command, for that is considered bad manners in such company.

If some question is raised in the presence of the Shaikh, the seeker [*murīd*] is obliged to remain silent, even if he feels sure that he could provide a satisfactory answer to it. He must rather seize the opportunity to hear what Allāh may reveal [*yaftaḥu*] on the tongue of his Shaikh, and then accept it and put it into practice. Even if he detects some inadequacy or deficiency in the Shaikh's answer, he must not object to it. He must rather give thanks to Allāh (Exalted is He) for the special grace, knowledge and light that He has conferred upon his Shaikh, and keep all those other thoughts and feelings concealed within himself.

He must not do a lot of talking, and he certainly must not say: "The Shaikh is mistaken on that point." He must never contradict what the Shaikh has to say, unless he is irresistibly compelled to do so, and the words simply pop out of his mouth. If that should happen, he must make amends for it at once, through silence, repentance, and a

firm resolution to avoid any repetition, as we have previously mentioned in the course of this book, when describing how he should implement his repentance of sins against Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). Where the seeker [*murīd*] is concerned, all goodness resides in his silence, in everything connected with this path of his.

While the spiritual concert [*samāʿ*]<sup>11</sup> is in progress, the seeker [*murīd*] must refrain from making movements, in the presence of the Shaikh, unless he gives him the signal to do so. On no account should he manifest a state of ecstasy, unless he experiences an overwhelming rapture, which leaves him no option or choice. In such a case, as soon as the intensity of his experience has subsided, he must revert to his normal state of quiet calm, well-mannered behavior, respectful dignity, and concealment of whatever secret Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has entrusted to him.

We have seen fit to mention this subject here, although we have not been devoting much space to the spiritual concert [*samāʿ*], chanting [*qawl*], the music of the reed flute [*qaṣab*], and dancing [*raqs*]. In previous contexts, we have simply described such practices as undesirable. If we raise the topic now, we do so because the spiritual concert [*samāʿ*] is a favorite practice of our (Ṣūfī) contemporaries, in their guesthouses [*arbiṭa*] and during their gatherings, and it cannot be denied that some of its practitioners are quite genuine. From the inner meaning of what is heard [in the concert], the participant receives an exciting stimulus, which arouses the ardent fervor of his truthful nature [*ṣidq*], so he is absorbed by his fervor, and loses his ordinary consciousness therein. Then his limbs and organs are set in motion, and he moves about among the people present, in a state of detachment from the physical pleasures and passions described in the chanting. This experience invariably evokes a sense of nearness to someone very dear to him, either someone who has died, after a long and close relationship, or someone who, though still alive, is far away from him, and so his yearning is intensified.

As for the truthful seeker [*al-murīd aṣ-ṣādiq*], his fervor is never subdued, his torch is never dimmed, his Beloved [*Mahbūb*] is never absent, and his Intimate Friend [*Anīs*] is never alienated, so he is always experiencing even greater nearness and closeness, delight and bliss, and nothing can change him, or excite him out of his spiritual state, apart

<sup>11</sup> See pp. 80–85 below.

from the Speech [*Kalām*] of the One who is Sought [*Murād*] by him, and the Tradition [*Hadīth*] of the One who is his Lord [*Rabb*] (Almighty and Glorious is He). This gives him an excellent alternative to the poems, the songs, the tunes, and the noisy clamor of the pretenders, the partners of the devils, the riders of passionate desires, the steeds of their own lower selves [*nufūs*] and natural instincts, the followers of every shouter and screamer.

The seeker [*murīd*] is obliged to refrain from disputing with anyone during the spiritual concert [*samāʿ*]. While it is in progress, he must refrain from pressing anyone to importune the chanter, the one who recites those pious and eloquent verses, which arouse longing for the Gardens of Paradise, the heavenly brides [*ḥūr*], and the vision of the Lord of Truth (Exalted is He) in the hereafter, while inspiring abstinence from this world, its lustful pleasures and its carnal appetites, its sons and its women, and encouraging the patient endurance of its misfortunes, its trials and its tribulations, its rejection of the sons of the hereafter, and its devotion to its own sons, and so on.

He must entrust all that to the Shaikh in attendance, for the people present are in the Shaikh's care, unless at that moment—O Allāh [*Allāhumma*]!—the listener is one of those who are specially entitled [*mustahiqqīn*]. He must therefore observe well-mannered behavior on the surface, while inwardly disowning his affectation, for there can be no doubt that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will either appoint someone to importune on his behalf, or inspire the chanter to repeat his recitation, again and again, so that the truthful listener can accomplish his eager wish and desire.



## Still more concerning the proper conduct [*adab*] of the seeker [*murīd*] in relation to the Shaikh.

If the seeker [*murīd*] wishes to receive training from a Shaikh, he must have a faith [*īmān*], a belief [*taṣḍīq*], and a firm conviction [*i'tiqād*] that there is no one better qualified than he, in all the neighboring districts, to help him fulfill his aspiration. He must feel sure that the Shaikh will accept him for the sake of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and that his innermost being [*sirr*] will be safe with Allāh (Exalted is He), when he enters the Shaikh's service, and commits his search [*irāda*] to his care, by becoming his pupil. He must feel sure that nothing will be uttered by the tongue of his Shaikh, except that which is in his best interest.

He must be very careful not to contradict him, because opposition to the Shaikhs is a deadly poison, and its harmfulness is far-reaching. He must not disagree with him in explicit terms, nor by implication.

He must make every effort to avoid concealing anything from his Shaikh, in connection with his spiritual states and secrets, and he must not tell anyone else about the instructions he receives from his Shaikh.

He must not resort to applying for concessions [*rukhaṣ*], or revert to something he has abandoned for the sake of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), for that is one of the major offenses [*kabā'ir*], and it amounts to the cancellation of the search [*irāda*], according to the people of the Spritual Path [*Ṭarīqa*]. Allāh's Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

The person who goes back on his gift is like the dog that vomits, then goes back and licks it up.

The seeker [*murīd*] is obliged to practice strict adherence to the instructions he receives from his Shaikh, in order to ensure that his training is effective in correcting his bad behavior. If he is guilty of any

shortcoming in the performance of his Shaikh's directions, he is obliged to inform his Shaikh about it, so that he can advise him accordingly, and pray for him to be granted the blessings of enabling grace [*tawfiq*], facilitation [*taisir*] and success [*falāh*].



## Concerning what is required of the Shaikh in the process of training the seeker [*murīd*].

As for what is required of the Shaikh, in the process of training the seeker [*murīd*], he must first of all accept him [as his pupil] for the sake of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), not for his own sake. Then he must relate to him on the basis of sincere advice [*naṣīḥa*], and regard him with the eye of tender loving care.

He must treat his pupil with gentle kindness, when he finds it hard to cope with rigorous exercise [*riyāḍa*], for he must train him as a mother trains her child, and as a gentle, wise and understanding father trains his son and his servant. He must therefore set him fairly easy tasks, and not burden him beyond his capacity, until he is ready for more difficult tests.

He must start by commanding him to refrain, in all his affairs, from obeying the dictates of his instinctual nature, and to practice the special dispensations [*rukhaṣ*] of the sacred law [*shar'*], until he is thereby delivered from the control and domination of his natural instincts, and comes to accept the control and bondage of the sacred law [*shar'*]. The Shaikh must then transfer him from the special dispensations [*rukhaṣ*] to the strict application [*'aẓīma*], one thing at a time, by erasing one practice from the category of dispensations, and replacing it with a practice from the category of strict application.

If he detects in his pupil, at the very outset, a genuine capacity for strenuous exertion [*mujāhada*] and adherence to the strict application of the law [*'aẓīma*], and if he perceives that quality in him by the light of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), through revealed insight, and understanding conferred by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), in accordance with what has always been the custom [*sunna*] of Allāh in dealing with His believing servants, such as the saints [*awliyā'*], the beloved friends [*aḥbāb*], the trusted agents [*umana'*], and those well versed in knowledge of Him [*al-'ulamā' bi-hi*]<sup>1</sup>—in a case like this, the

Shaikh is not required to treat him in the indulgent manner described above.

If the pupil fits this description, the Shaikh must set him the most difficult exercises [*riyādāt*], knowing that he does not lack the strength of purpose they demand, since he is convinced that he was created for that kind of training, that he is worthy of it, and that it is what he really needs. He must not cheat him by treating him too lightly.

The Shaikh must not take advantage of the seeker [*murīd*], under any circumstance, by profiting from his wealth or his service. Nor must he expect any recompense from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), or anything at all, in exchange for the training he provides. His only motive for training and educating him must be compliance with Allāh's will (Almighty and Glorious is He), by carrying out His commandment, and accepting the pupil as a special present and unusual gift from Him. For the seeker [*murīd*] is one who has come, not through any process of selection or procurement initiated by the Shaikh, but by a pure decree of destiny [*qadar maḥḍ*], through the direction [*irshād*], guidance [*hidāya*] and saving grace [*inqādh*] bestowed upon him by Allāh (Exalted is He). He is therefore a present from Allāh, and the Shaikh must accept him and treat him well, by giving him an excellent course of training and education.

It would therefore be wrong for the Shaikh to take advantage of him, or profit from his wealth, except at Allāh's command (Exalted is He). He must employ him for good purposes, and accept what the seeker brings with him, of the wealth that Allāh (Exalted is He) has provided for his well-being and safe passage, and of which He has allotted a portion to the Shaikh, for he then has no cause to refuse and reject it.

He must be very wary of trying to choose what the seeker [*murīd*] ought to experience. He must leave that to the action of Allāh, and His decree [*qadar*], for it was Allāh (Exalted is He) who brought the seeker to him, without any effort on his part, without selection by his heart, and without his personal interest being involved. He will then be assisted and guided in training him, and the seeker's progress and success will be accelerated. The Shaikh must therefore be on guard, to ensure that his personal desire does not become involved, for then he would lose the enabling guidance [*tawfiq*], along with the protection he enjoys in relation to the seeker [*murīd*].

It is incumbent upon the Shaikh to train him through his spiritual influence [*himmā*], and to repent on his behalf, in his innermost being [*sirr*], if he discovers any fault or weakness in him. It is also incumbent upon him to keep the inner condition of the seekers [*murīdīn*] a secret to himself, so he must not share with anyone else the insight he has obtained through observing their spiritual states, whether by means of an esoteric faculty of knowledge [*‘ilm ladunī*], a talent conferred by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), or by means of a private disclosure, a confidence imparted to him by the seeker. When he is told something in confidence, he must not divulge it to anyone else, because it is a deposit entrusted to his safekeeping. As the saying goes: “The breasts of free men are the tombs of secrets [*ṣudūr al-ahrār qubūr al-asrār*].”

The Shaikh must be a place of comfort for the seekers [*murīdīn*], and a storeroom and vault for their secrets. He must serve as a refuge for them, and a cave. He must be a source of encouragement, strength and assistance, and someone who keeps them firmly on the path. He must not scare them away from the path, their mutual fellowship, and their commitment to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

If he notices that the seeker [*murīd*] is guilty of something reprehensible, in terms of the sacred law [*shar‘*], the Shaikh must admonish him in private, and correct his behavior. He must forbid him to repeat that offense, whether it be a violation of the roots and branches [of the sacred law], or a pretentious claim to a spiritual state he does not possess, or a vain conceit with regard to his deeds and his power of perception. The Shaikh must save him from the pitfall of vain conceit, and belittle his deeds and states in his eyes, so that he does not perish, for arrogant pride will cause the servant to fall from the gracious sight of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

If the Shaikh wishes to deliver the admonition to the whole community [*jamā‘a*], he must assemble them and address them in these words: “It has come to my attention that there is someone, in your midst, who lays false claim to such-and-such, and says such-and-such, and is guilty of such-and-such.” He must then go on to describe what is at stake, in terms of the corrupting effects [of such behavior], and the beneficial results [of abstaining from it]. He must remind them of the dangers, and put them on their guard.



In delivering this admonition, however, he must not identify any specific individual amongst them, as being the guilty culprit, because of the inherent risk of causing alienation. If he behaves and speaks in a boorish manner, divulges their secrets, slanders them, strips them down, and mentions all their bad sides, their hearts will feel an aversion to approaching him and keeping him company.

That will cause them to adopt a suspicious attitude toward the people of the Spiritual Path [*Ṭarīqa*], and toward the seed of the saints [*awliyā'*] of Allāh (Exalted is He), that had been planted in their hearts. The Shaikh must therefore be very wary of such behavior. If it comes upon him irresistibly, and he cannot control it, he must dismiss himself from the office of Shaikh, and resign from his saintly position of authority [*wilāya*]. He must isolate himself from the seekers [*murīdīn*], concentrate on the struggle with his own lower self [*nafs*] and its rigorous exercise, and look for a Shaikh who will educate him, correct him, and put him through a strict course of training. It is utterly useless for him to be a Shaikh, while accompanied by all these calamities, so he must not interrupt the progress of the seekers [*murīdīn*] on their Spiritual Path [*Ṭarīqa*] toward Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).



## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Concerning the fellowship of spiritual brothers [*ṣuḥbat al-ikhwān*] and fellowship with strangers [*aṣ-ṣuḥba ma'a 'l-ajānib*], as well as the nature of fellowship with the rich [*aḡhniyā'*] and the poor [*fuqarā'*].

### 1.

Concerning fellowship with one's spiritual brothers [*aṣ-ṣuḥba ma'a 'l-ikhwān*].

As for the seeker's fellowship [*ṣuḥba*] with his spiritual brothers [*ikhwān*], it is a matter of preferential treatment [*ithār*], chivalrous conduct [*futuwwa*], overlooking their faults and failings, and regarding his relationship with them as a binding contract of service. He must not see himself as having any right [*ḥaqq*] over any one of them, nor must he claim that any debt [*ḥaqq*] is owed to him by any one of them. He must regard each one of them as having a right [*ḥaqq*] over him, and he must not fall short in according them their due [*ḥaqq*].

His fellowship with them must include the obvious demonstration of agreement with them, in all that they say or do. He must always side with them against himself, interpret things to their advantage, and find excuses for them. He must refrain from contradicting them, arguing with them, quarreling with them, and bickering with them, and he must turn a blind eye to their faults.

He must always take good care of his brothers' hearts, and avoid doing anything they would find unpleasant, even if he knows that it could be of some benefit to them. He must not harbor a feeling of spite toward any one of them. If the heart of one of them is permeated with animosity toward him, he must behave with him politely, until that feeling

dissipates. If it still persists, he must treat him in an even friendlier and more engaging manner, until it finally evaporates. If he finds his own heart affected by a sense of alienation from one of them, and by a feeling of annoyance, due to backbiting [*ghība*] or some other cause, he must not let that show from himself, but rather present the opposite appearance.



## 2. Concerning fellowship with strangers [*aṣ-ṣuḥba ma' a 'l-ajānib*].

When it comes to fellowship with strangers, the spiritual seeker must keep his innermost being [*sirr*] secret from them. He must regard them with the eye of kindness and compassion, and see to it that their goods are delivered to them safely. He must keep the rules of the Spiritual Path [*Tarīqa*] out of their sight. He must be patient with their bad habits, and refrain from close association with them, as far as he can.

He must not attribute to himself a degree of virtue superior to theirs. Speaking of them, he must say: “They are among the people who enjoy immunity [*ahl as-salāma*], so Allāh will let them pass unchallenged.” Speaking to himself, on the other hand, he must say: “You are one of those who are subject to strict review [*ahl al-muḏāyāqa*], so you will be held responsible for the slightest snap of the fingers [*naqīr*] and the merest trifle [*qitmīr*], for both the small change and the major sum. You will be called to account, not only for matters of great importance, but also for minor details.”

Allāh (Exalted is He) overlooks certain things in the case of the ignorant person, but He does not overlook those same things in the case of someone endowed with knowledge. He takes little notice of the common folk [*ʿawāmm*], but the special few [*khawāṣṣ*] are in grave jeopardy.



### 3. Concerning fellowship with the rich [aṣ-ṣuḥba ma‘a ‘l-aghniyā’].

As for fellowship [ṣuḥba] with the rich, you must relate to them with an attitude of dignified detachment, free from greedy ambition, and nursing no hope of acquiring what they have at their disposal. You must keep all such people outside of your heart, and preserve your religious commitment [dīn] from the damage caused by fawning upon them to win their favor. As we learn from the tradition [ḥadīth], it was the Prophet himself (Allāh bless him and give him peace) who said:

When someone fawns upon a rich man, because of what he has at his disposal, two thirds of his religion [dīn] are gone.

Let us therefore take refuge with Allāh, from any action that diminishes our religious commitment! As indicated by the tradition [ḥadīth], you must shun the fellowship of those types of people, whose influence is detrimental to religion [dīn] and tends to sever its binding ties, and whose possessions and worldly interests may be dazzling enough to extinguish the light of faith [īmān]. There may be occasions, of course, when their fellowship [ṣuḥba] is unavoidably inflicted upon you, in the course of a journey or an expedition, or in the congregational setting of a mosque [masjid] or a guesthouse [ribāṭ]. In situations like these, your behavior should conform to the best standard of conventional conduct.

This is a general rule, applicable to fellowship [ṣuḥba] with the rich and the poor alike, for you must not attribute to yourself a degree of virtue superior to theirs. On the contrary, you must be firmly convinced that all your fellow creatures are better than you, in order to avoid the pitfall of arrogant pride. You must not claim the special merit of poverty for your own self [nafs], nor attribute any great importance to it, either in this world or in the hereafter. You must not see it as having any value or weight, for, as the saying goes: “If someone ascribes any value to his

own self, he has no value, and if he ascribes any weight to it, he carries no weight.”

In the case of the rich man [*ghani*], proper conduct [*adab*] is a matter of treating the poor man well, which means taking money out of his purse and handing it over to him. He must be detached from his wealth, dealing with it in the capacity of a custodian [*mustakhlaf*], rather than that of a proprietor [*mutamallik*].

In the case of the poor man [*faqir*], proper conduct [*adab*] is a matter of keeping the rich man out of his heart, which means that his heart must be detached from the rich man and his wealth, and indeed, from this world and the hereafter altogether. He must not provide a home or a lodging in his heart, nor an entrance thereto, for anything whatsoever. It must become absolutely pure and empty of all of that. Then he must watch and wait for it to be filled by his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), so that nothing but He has any presence, and nothing else can exert any power or strength. Once that has been accomplished, he will receive the gracious favor of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and he will then obtain wealth through Him (Almighty and Glorious is He), without weary labor and anxious concern.



#### 4. Concerning fellowship with the poor [aṣ-ṣuḥba ma‘a ‘l-fuqarā’].

As for fellowship [ṣuḥba] with the poor [fuqarā’], it is a matter of according them preferential treatment [iṭhār], of putting them before yourself, in respect of food and drink, clothing, gratification, entertainment, and everything that is precious. You must regard your own self [nafs] as being beneath them, and you must not see it as having any superiority over them, not in anything whatsoever.

Abū Sa‘d ibn Aḥmad ibn ‘Īsā is reported as having said: “I kept fellowship with the poor [fuqarā’] for all of thirty years, and never was anything spoken between me and them, that would have hurt or troubled them. Nor did anything disturbing happen between me and them, that would have caused them distress.” When someone asked him: “How was that possible?” he replied: “Because I always sided with them against myself. Whenever I entered their presence, I brought them happiness and kindness. I dealt with them on the basis of morality, propriety, good manners and flexibility.”

You must not regard such behavior as entitling you to some advantage over them. On the contrary, you must take it as a compliment from them, that they accept such treatment from you. Beware of bestowing that treatment upon them in a patronizing manner, or seeing it as something that comes from you. You must rather give thanks to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), for having entrusted you with His enabling grace [tawfiq], and so made that possible for you, and for having rendered you capable of service to His people, His special élite [khāṣṣa], and His dearly beloved friends [aḥbāb].

The paupers [fuqarā’] and the righteous [ṣāliḥīn] are Allāh’s people and His special élite [khāṣṣa], as the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has told us:

The people of the Qur’ān are Allāh’s people and His special élite [khāṣṣa]. The people of the Qur’ān are those who put the Qur’ān into active practice. As for those who read it without acting upon it, they are not included among His people.

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) also said:

A person does not believe in the Qur'ān, if he treats as lawful the things it has declared unlawful.

You must therefore remember that, when someone accepts a gift from you, the benefit is the recipient's, not yours.

The following refinements of behavior [*ādāb*] must all be cultivated in fellowship with the poor [*ṣuḥba ma'a 'l-fuqarā'*]:

- You should not make it necessary for them to ask you for anything they need. If it happens nevertheless, and the pauper [*faqīr*] asks you for something in the form of a loan, you should lend it to him in the outer sense [*ẓāhir*]. Then, in your inner feeling [*bāṭin*], you should absolve him from the obligation to repay. You should let him know about this as soon as possible, but without making him think that the gift comes with invisible strings, so that he will not carry the embarrassing feeling that you have done him a favor.

- It is important to respect the feelings of his heart, by supplying what he needs immediately, instead of giving him a hard time by keeping him waiting, because the pauper is the son of his present moment [*ibn waqti-hi*]. In the words of the traditional saying: “The son of Adam is the son of his present day, and he has no time to spend on waiting for the future.”

- If you are well aware that he has dependents and young children to care for, you must not devote all your kind attention to him personally, as if he were a separate individual. You must rather extend your kindness to include his broader situation, and the people with whom his heart is preoccupied.

- You must listen with patience [*ṣabr*] while the pauper tells you about his situation. While he talks to you about it, you must let him see a cheerful, welcoming expression on your face. You must not scowl or frown at him, nor utter a word that might discourage him. If he asks you for something that is unavailable at the time, you must wear a pleasant expression, as you direct him to whatever assistance may exist within the realm of possibility. You must not reduce him to despair, by dismissing him abruptly, in case he goes away with a sense of futility, feeling that it was pointless to present his need to you, and regretting the fact that he divulged his secret to you, all to no avail.



This could have serious consequences, in that his primitive instincts might overwhelm him, and his lower self [*nafs*] might seize control of him. If that should happen, he might yield to outright foolishness, not only hating you, but remonstrating with the Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and protesting that, while He consigned him to dependence on other creatures, He treated them with excessive generosity. His heart would thus become blind, and the light of his faith would be extinguished. You would then be to blame for all of that, since you were a cause of that commotion in his heart, through a lack of good manners in the way you dismissed him.

He might also be cut off from the spiritual reward, the insights, the lessons, and all the other benefits that are concealed within his begging from fellow creatures. If he had persevered with patience, and persisted in good behavior, those hidden benefits would have become apparent. The need to beg from his fellow creatures would then have departed, and he would have obtained the riches of the hand, the heart and the home. The troops of Allāh's bounty would then have come to him, along with His blessings and His gracious favor. He would have been guided by the hand of gentle kindness, compassion, comfort and safekeeping. He would have become a living proof of His assertion (Almighty and Glorious is He):

And He befriends  
and protects the righteous.  
(7:196)

*wa Huwa*  
*yatawalla 'ṣ-ṣāliḥīn.*

He would have been protected and jealously safeguarded. He would have been independent of things, because of their Creator. Things would have come to him, and he would not have gone looking for things. When visitors called to see him, they would have been touched by his radiant vibrations and his innermost being [*sirr*], and improved by his goodness, though he would have been quite unaware of their presence. He would have been in a state of absence [*ghaib*] from them, wholly preoccupied with his Master [*Mawlā*] and the force of attraction [*jādhīb*] that drew him toward Him, saving him from the gloom and darkness of mingling with creatures, complying with the dictates of the lower self [*nafs*], following the passions, and being subject to the will of things, both worldly and otherworldly.

See, those who are worthy  
of the Garden [of Paradise]  
are busy this day in their rejoicing.  
(36:55)

*inna aṣḥāba 'l-jannati 'l-yawma  
fi shughulin  
fākihūn.*

They became the people of the Garden of Paradise, because, here in this world, they sold their persons and their goods to their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), in exchange for the Garden of Paradise. As He has told us (Glorious is and Exalted is He):

Allāh has bought from the believers  
their persons and their goods,  
the Garden [of Paradise] being theirs  
for the price. (9:111)

*inna 'llāha 'shtarā  
mina 'l-mu' minīna anfusa-hum  
wa amwāla-hum  
bi-anna la-humu 'l-janna.*

They patiently endured the pain of bankruptcy [*iflās*] in this world, and transferred the management of their persons, their goods, and their children, to their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). They surrendered everything to His direct control (Magnificent is His Majesty), apart from [their responsibility to observe] the commandments and prohibitions [of the sacred law]. They obeyed the commandments, and observed the prohibitions, while they surrendered in the face of destiny's decree [*maqḍūr*]. They viewed the created universe with wary circumspection, and kept themselves detached from the will, from desires, and from ambitious tendencies in general.

He therefore caused them to enter the Garden of Paradise, and kept them occupied with that which no eye has ever seen, of which no ear has ever heard, and the very notion of which has never occurred to the human heart. As He has told us (Glorious is and Exalted is He):

See, those who are worthy  
of the Garden [of Paradise]  
are busy this day in their rejoicing.  
(36:55)

*inna aṣḥāba 'l-jannati 'l-yawma  
fi shughulin  
fākihūn.*

If the pauper [*faqīr*] does all that in this world, he will likewise be entitled to the Garden of Paradise, as the Qur'ān clearly states. He must then sell the Garden of Paradise immediately, in exchange for his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and seek "the neighbor [*jār*] before the house [*dār*]." He will thus be following the advice of Rābī'a al-'Adawiyya (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon her),<sup>12</sup> for it was she

<sup>12</sup> Rābī'a bint Ismā'il al-'Adawiyya (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon her) was sold into slavery as a child. She later settled in Baṣra, where she attained great renown as a remarkable saint and effective preacher. Devoted to loving intimacy with Allah (Exalted is He), she never married. The date of her death is given as A.H. 135/752 C.E. by some authorities, while others assign it to the year A.H. 185/801 C.E. (See also Vol. 2, p. 178.)

who coined the expression: “The neighbor before the house [*al-jār qabla ’d-dār*].” As Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has told us [in the Qur’ān]:

They seek His countenance. *yurīdūna wajha-h.*  
(6:52)

—and as Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said in one of His earlier Books of Scripture [*Kutub*]:

Of those who are dear to Me, the dearest of all is a servant who worships Me without expecting any favor, but only to give Lordship [*Rubūbiyya*] its due.

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

If Allāh (Exalted is He) had not created the Garden of Paradise and the Fire of Hell, nobody would have worshipped Him.

It was ‘Alī [ibn Abī Ṭālib] (may Allāh be well pleased with him) who said: “If Allāh (Exalted is He) had created neither the Garden of Paradise nor the Fire of Hell, He would not have been One who deserves [*ahl*] to be worshipped.”

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said [of Himself]:

He is Worthy of true devotion,  
and Qualified to grant forgiveness. *Huwa ahlu ’t-taqwā  
wa ahlu ’l-maghfirā.*  
(74:56)

Well then, if the pauper [*faqīr*] fits the description outlined above—so that he is truly bankrupt of everything apart from his Master [*Mawlā*], and his heart has been cleansed of dependence on things, and he has ceased to exist as far as they are concerned, and he has really become a seeker [*murīd*], and he is absent from everything apart from his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He)—it will be incumbent upon the noble nature of Allāh to befriend and protect him, to guide him, and to treat him with gracious favor, in this world until the time of the Rendezvous [*Liqā’*].

Then He will grant him even more than that. He will bestow new favors upon him, including robes of honor of various kinds, radiant lights, comfort and ease, the good life, and nearness to what He has prepared for His saints [*awliyā’*] and his beloved friends [*aḥbāb*], as He has hinted in His words (Almighty and Glorious is He):

So no soul knows what comfort  
is kept secretly in store for them, *fa-lā ta’lamu nafsun  
mā ukhfīya la-hum*

as a reward  
for what they used to do. (32:17)

*min qurrati a'yun:  
jazā'an bi-mā kānū ya'malūn.*

There is also the saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) says: "I have prepared for My righteous servants that which no eye has ever seen, of which no ear has ever heard, and the very notion of which has never occurred to the human heart."

Whenever Abū Huraira (may Allāh be well pleased with him) heard this, he used to say: "Recite, if you wish, the Qur'ānic verse [āya]:

So no soul knows what comfort  
is kept secretly in store for them,  
as a reward  
for what they used to do. (32:17)"

*fa-lā ta'lamu nafsun  
mā ukhfiya la-hum  
min qurrati a'yun:  
jazā'an bi-mā kānū ya'malūn.*

Allāh will punish you, if you turn away the pauper, who, though empty-handed, is rich at heart, and who is carrying out the order of his Master [Mawlā] in telling you about his condition, for the sake of his dependents or for his own sake—obedient to his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) in doing that, and afraid of displeasing Him—and who did not refrain from begging from you, since Allāh charged him with that task, and imposed it on him as a test. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has told us:

And We have appointed some of you  
a test for others:  
Will you be steadfast? (25:20)

*wa ja'alnā ba'ḍa-kum  
li-ba'ḍin fitna:  
a-taṣbirūn.*

This is not a permanent condition. It will actually end quite soon, and the pauper will be transported to the lasting wealth and honor that has been allotted to him, in the nearness of his Master [Mawlā].

Allāh will punish you, O you who are wealthy-handed, but poor at heart, ignorant of both yourself and your Lord, of both your starting point and your ultimate destination! He will punish you by stripping the wealth from your hand, so you will come to be empty-handed, as you used to be poor at heart. You will always be poor, where things are concerned, since your appetite for them can never be satisfied. You will always be greedy for them, seeking them, agonizing over the desire for them and the means of obtaining them, only to find that they have not been allotted to you.

As one of the wise has said: “The harshest of all punishments is the quest for that which has not been allotted [by destiny].” Such will be your fate, unless Allāh wraps you in His mercy, and thereby alerts you to your sin, so that you seek His forgiveness, turn to Him in repentance, and confess your negligence, and He relents toward you and forgives you. So repent to Allāh, for He is the Most Merciful of the merciful [*Arḥam ar-rāḥimīn*], Ever-Forgiving [*Ghafūr*], All-Compassionate [*Raḥīm*].



## Concerning the modes of behavior required of the spiritual pauper in his poverty [*ādāb al-faqr fī faqri-hi*].

The spiritual pauper [*faqīr*] should devote his tender loving care to his poverty, just as the rich man devotes his tender loving care to his wealth. Just as the rich man does everything he can, and spares no effort, to ensure that his wealth does not vanish away, it is incumbent upon the pauper to do likewise, to ensure that his poverty does not disappear. This means that he should neither ask Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) to translate his poverty into wealth, nor focus his attention on livelihood and income, on ways of earning money, and on the means of getting rich. If he has any interest in acquiring more wealth, it should only be for sake of his dependents, and to safeguard his personal virtue under the stress of difficult circumstances.

To meet the required standard, the spiritual pauper [*faqīr*] must settle for what is sufficient for his needs, and not reach beyond that level of sufficiency. By settling for that amount, he will be in compliance with the commandment of Allāh (Exalted is He), and on guard against the danger of committing the sin of suicide [*qatl an-nafs*]. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has told us:

And do not kill your own selves.  
Surely Allāh is ever Compassionate  
unto you. (4:29)

*wa lā taqtulū anfusa-kum*  
*inna 'llāha kāna*  
*bi-kum Raḥīmā.*

It is unlawful for him to deny his lower self [*nafs*] its due, which is the right to be nourished with food and drink, provided with clothing, and supplied with whatever is necessary to support its physical constitution. He must not be too weak to carry out the commandments [of the sacred law], such as the fulfillment of the preconditions of the ritual prayer [*sharā'it aṣ-ṣalāt*], its basic essentials [*arkān*] and its necessary elements [*wājibāt*],<sup>13</sup> as well as every other religious duty.

<sup>13</sup> For a comprehensive account of the preconditions [*sharā'it*], basic essentials [*arkān*], and necessary elements [*wājibāt*] of the ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*], see Vol. 1, pp. 8–16.

While giving the self its basic due [*ḥaqq*], he must leave out anything that constitutes a luxury [*ḥaẓẓ*]. If something belongs to him, as his predestined allotment [*qisma*], it will be conveyed to him inevitably, not through his own involvement in the process, but through the action of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). This means that he must never concern himself with luxuries, unless he happens to be sick, and some kind of luxury is prescribed for him as a form of therapeutic treatment. In such a case, the luxury [*ḥaẓẓ*] becomes a right [*ḥaqq*], in the context of his sickness, just like nourishment in the context of his good health.

The following points are also extremely important to note:

- The pleasure he takes in his poverty must be greater than the rich man's delight in the existence of his wealth.
- He must actually prefer his humble status, his obscurity, and the fact that people do not invite him to their homes, do not come to visit him, and do not gather around him in crowds.
- In order to meet the required standard, his heart must be in a stronger state of spiritual purity [*ṣafā' al-ḥāl*] when he is materially empty-handed. In other words, whenever the financial successes [*futūḥ*] are few and far between, the goodness of his heart should multiply, along with its strength and its radiance, and his delight in the banner of the righteous [*ṣāliḥīn*] should increase. If that casts a shadow of gloom upon his heart, and makes him feel bitter and displeased with his Lord, he must realize that he is a madman, who has committed a heinous sin in his poverty. He must therefore repent to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and seek His forgiveness. He must concentrate on exposing the lower self [*nafs*] to searching examination, thorough investigation, and stern reproach.



## Concerning the conduct required of the spiritual pauper [*faqīr*] who has many dependents.

Whenever the spiritual pauper [*faqīr*] has many dependents, his heart should be all the more firmly stationed at the door of the business of sustenance, and all the more reliant on his Lord. He must comply with the commandment of his Lord, by earning to support them in the outer sphere [*ẓāhir*], and he must rely on the promise of his Lord, in the inner domain [*bāṭin*]. He must be convinced that provision is assigned to them in the presence of Allāh, sustenance that He has promised and foreordained, and that He will convey it to them, either by his hand or by the hand of someone else.

He must therefore renounce the rôle of middleman, and not act as an uncommissioned agent [*fudūli*]. Instead of intervening between his fellow creatures and their Creator, he must obey the commandment in his dealings with them. He must not be at variance with the Lord, nor be resentful and suspicious of Him, and he must not doubt His promise. He must not complain to anyone. His complaint should be addressed to his Lord, and his need must be presented to Him (Almighty and Glorious is He). His speech and his begging should be addressed to Him, as a request for His enabling guidance [*tawfiq*], so that he may be patient, so that he may fulfill the commandment concerning what is due to his dependents, and so that he may be content to accept the hardship that He has decreed for them, and the fact that He has obliged him to carry their burden.

He should beg Him to make their sustenance smoothly and easily available, for He is Near [*Qarīb*] and Responsive [*Mujīb*]. When He subjects His servant to trial and tribulation, He is merely using the affliction to bring him back to Himself (Almighty and Glorious is He), because He loves those who urgently beseech Him with their begging. It is begging that distinguishes the Lord [*Rabb*] from the slave [*marbūb*],



the Master [*Sayyid*] from the servant [*‘abd*], the One who is Rich [*Ghanī*] from the one who is poor [*faqīr*]. It is begging that moves the servant away from pride, haughtiness, self-aggrandizement and arrogance, and brings him to modesty, humility, and recognition of his state of need. Once the servant has truly undergone that transformation, the response to his plea will be realized quickly, here in this world, not to mention the reward that will be held in store for him in the hereafter.



## Further modes of conduct required of the spiritual pauper [*faqīr*].

He must not take any interest in the time that is still in the future. He should rather be wholly concerned with his present moment. Instead of looking forward to the next moment ahead, he must concentrate on preserving his spiritual state, its limits, its stipulations, and its rules of proper conduct, studiously focusing his gaze to avoid being distracted by anything else, whether above it or below it. He must also beware of coveting the spiritual state of anyone else, for it might harbor his destruction, even though it represents safety and well-being for the other person.

This bears comparison with foodstuffs, for certain foodstuffs make a particular individual healthier than ever, but they may bring sickness and misfortune to another, so the invalid must not include any part of them in his diet, except by order of the physician. It is equally important for the spiritual pauper [*faqīr*] to refrain from choosing a particular state for himself, so that, if he does enter into it, he will do so not of his own volition, but through the action of the Master [*Mawlā*] (Almighty and Glorious is He), the One who operates by pure decree and absolute will.

- He must not deliberately intrude his own self [*nafs*] into any of the spiritual states [*hālāt*] and stations [*maqāmāt*], and cause it to settle therein, for then he would go astray and perish. He must wait until the command comes to him from the One who causes death and brings to life, and until he is relocated by the action of the One who withholds and gives, impoverishes and enriches, makes men laugh and makes men weep, because that is more proper for him, and nearer and closer to his Lord. Such is the instruction that was followed and handed down by our predecessors, the masters of knowledge [*ulī'l-‘ilm*] among the people of

the Spiritual Path [*ahl at-Ṭarīqa*], as the only course they saw fit to pursue, for the Lord of the created universe is the ultimate goal.

- He must be prepared for the arrival of death, in a state of readiness for it, watchful and on the lookout at all times. That will be helpful to him, in being content with his poverty, and in bearing any troubles that befall him, because it will enable him to curtail his expectation. The lower self [*nafs*] will be subdued thereby, and it will cease to glow with the intense heat of worldly appetites. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has told us:

You must make a frequent practice of remembering the wrecker of delights [*hādhim al-ladhdhāt*], by which I mean death.

- He must rid his heart of all recollection of created beings.
- He must behave politely with the rich man, when the latter pays him a visit, by offering him whatever food or fruit he has at his disposal, even if it is something very plain and simple. Since he is wary in his heart of all material means [*asbāb*], it is incumbent upon him to be altruistic, more than it is upon the rich man, who is held in captivity by his wealth. This advice does not apply, however, if he has dependents in straitened circumstances, for he must not make life hard for his dependents, by according that preferential treatment to the rich man—unless he has already learned, from his dependents themselves, that they happily endorse his altruism, that they willingly choose patience, contentment, inner wisdom [*maʿrifa*] and certainty [*yaqīn*], and that radiant lights shine from their hearts, to illuminate their tongues, their physical bodies, and their souls [*anfus*]. If such be the case, he is not torn between giving freely and withholding, between generosity and restraint.

- He must not abandon the practice of pious caution [*waraʿ*], not even in the state of empty-handedness. He must not risk trespassing, because of his poverty, on that which is not allowed by the sacred law [*sharʿ*], by deserting the strict interpretation [*ʿaẓīma*] in favor of the dispensations [*rukhas*]. Pious caution [*waraʿ*] is the mainstay of religion [*dīn*], while greed is its destruction, and acts of dubious legality [*shubuhāt*] result in its corruption.

As one of the righteous [*ṣāliḥīn*] once said: “If someone is not accompanied by pious caution [*waraʿ*] in his poverty, he will eat

forbidden food [*ḥarām*] without knowing it.” He must therefore resist the tendency to look for special interpretations [*taʿwīlāt*] of his religion, that might be convenient in his state of poverty. He should rather pursue the most difficult and the most prudent course, which means adhering to the strict interpretation [*ʿaẓīma*].



## Concerning the begging of the spiritual pauper [*su'āl al-faqīr*].

The proper conduct of the spiritual pauper [*adab al-faqīr*] includes refraining from begging from his fellow creatures, as long as he has enough at his disposal to meet his essential requirements. If he is then beset by urgent necessity and pressing need, he should beg in proportion to the need, since his need will be his atonement [*kaffāra*]. Under these circumstances, begging is actually assigned to him as a task to perform. He should not beg for his own sake, to the extent that he can avoid it, but rather for his dependents, as we have previously explained.

If, at his immediate disposal, he has a coin worth one-sixth of a dirham, and he needs a whole dirham [silver coin], he will not be charged with the task of begging, until he has spent the small coin, and can seriously claim to be completely out of funds. As the saying goes: “Nothing emerges from the hidden universe [*ghaib*], as long as you still have something in your own purse [*jaib*].”

There is a condition attached to his right to beg from his fellow creatures: namely, that he should not see them [as the potential donors], but should direct his begging gesture toward Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). He should look upon his fellow creatures as agents [*wukalā'*] and trustees [*umanā'*], who are merely the instruments by which the transaction is conducted. He must not accept them as lords [*arbāb*], instead of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). The point of his begging from them should therefore be to inform them of his condition, and that of his dependents, not to complain about his Lord.

His begging must be interrogative, so he should cast it in the form of questions, like: “Has something meant for us been delivered to you? Has it been forwarded to you? Have you been authorized to handle it, O agent, O custodian, O trustee, O slave, O pauper? Are we not equal, you and I, in terms of what we have at our disposal, since neither of us

is the Owner of it, and all of us are His dependents?" So long as he begs in this fashion, it is permissible, otherwise not.

No respect is due to any polytheist [*mushrik*], charlatan [*dajjāl*], dissimulator [*murā'in*], idol-worshipper [*'ābid al-aṣnām*], deserter from the ranks of the people of the Spiritual Path [*khārij 'an ahl at-Ṭarīqā*], pretender [*mudda'in*], persistent liar [*kadhhab*], hypocrite [*munāfiq*], or atheistic heretic [*zindīq*].

Then, if the beggar is given something, he must give thanks. If giving is withheld, he must be patient. Such are the attributes of the genuine spiritual pauper [*faqīr ṣādiq*]. He must not be disheartened by rejection. He must not let it change his attitude, so that he resorts to angry protest, blaming the rejector and abusing him unjustly. He must remember that he is addressing an official [*ma'mūr*] and an agent [*wakīl*], and the agent is merely the one who handles what is placed at his disposal, with the permission of his Commander [*Āmir*], while the One who appointed him is the Giver [*Mu'tī*], and He is none other than Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Instead of reacting badly, he must apply again to Him (Almighty and Glorious is He), and beg Him to make things easy and smooth, so that hearts will be inclined to serve him, difficulties will become simple for him, provisions will flow toward him, the allotments of destiny [*aqsām*] will be conveyed to him, and he will be relieved of hunger, torment, and groveling before slaves and masters.

Perhaps He gripped the hands of His creatures to prevent them from giving, in order to make the beggar turn to Him. The beggar must therefore cling to the door, and remove the screen by means of his supplication and humble entreaty, for He will be the One who gives to him, rather than any of His servants.



## Concerning the proper manners of social intercourse [*ādāb al-‘ishra*].

It is incumbent upon him [the spiritual pauper] to cultivate good social relations with his spiritual brothers [*ikhwān*]. In his dealings with them, he must therefore observe the following:

- He should wear a cheerful expression on his face, and not present them with a scowling countenance.
- He must not refuse to grant them anything they want from him, unless it would involve some breach of the sacred law [*shar‘*], violation of the divine statute [*ḥadd*], and sinful transgression. It must fall within the range of that which the sacred law [*shar‘*] has made permissible for him, and which the Lord has allowed him.
- He must not be argumentative and contentious.
- He must always be ready to encourage and assist his spiritual brothers, subject to the precondition we have mentioned.
- He must be tolerant toward them, when they disagree with him, and very patient [*ṣabūr*] with their annoying behavior, not at all resentful.
- He must not harbor bad feelings toward any one of them, such as the inclination to cheat and double-cross.
- He must not indulge in backbiting at their expense, when he is absent from their company, and, when he is present amongst them, he must not speak ill of an absentee.
- He must actively defend his spiritual brother during the latter’s absence.
- He must conceal his brothers’ faults, as far as he possibly can.
- If one of them falls sick, he must visit him. If he cannot pay him a proper visit, due to some urgent preoccupation, he should at least stop by to wish him a good recovery.
- If he himself falls sick, and one of his brothers fails to pay him a visit,

he must excuse him. Then, if that brother of his falls sick, he must visit him, and not pay him back by staying away.

- He must connect with those who cut him off, give to those who deprive him, and pardon those who do him wrong.

- If one of them treats him badly, he must offer himself an excuse on behalf of the offender, and turn the blame upon himself.

- He must not regard his property as being forbidden to any of his spiritual brothers, but he must not dispose of their property without their permission.

- He must not forget pious caution [*wara'*], in all his active and passive situations [*ḥarakāt wa sakanāt*].

- If one of his spiritual brothers treats him with an open feeling, and makes him a goodwill offering of something in his possession, he must respond to that quickly, cheerfully, joyfully and happily, accepting it from him as a gracious act of kindness, inasmuch as that brother has deemed him worthy of his goodwill, and has taken it upon himself to address his need.

- He must not borrow anything from anyone, if he can possibly manage without it.

- If someone borrows something from him, he should not ask him to return the loan, if he can bring himself to refrain from doing so, because the borrower has only borrowed it on account of his need. To demand the return of a loan is not consistent with chivalry [*futuwwa*], just as it is improper, according to the sacred law [*shar'*], to ask for a gift or present to be returned.

Even if he is not capable of that [of not demanding repayment of the loan], he should lend it to him quickly, and not withhold it from him, not even for one whole day. It is not consistent with his spiritual state, that he should regard himself as the exclusive owner of his property, because he is only a trustee [*amīn*]. He is not in a condition of slavery [*riqq*] to any material thing, and no thing owns him. If anyone owns a thing, that thing owns him, because a man is the slave of whatever holds him by the reins. He should rather look upon the things at his disposal as property belonging to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), for he and the rest of humankind are merely slaves belonging to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and all are equally subject to His ownership (Almighty and Glorious is He).



As for that which He has placed at the disposal of His creatures, its use must be subject to the rule of the sacred law [*ḥukm ash-sharʿ*], pious restraint [*waraʿ*], and strict observance of the divine statutes [*ḥudūd*], so that the user does not become one of those atheistic heretics [*zanādiqa*], the party of antinomian libertinism [*zumrat al-ibāḥiyya*].<sup>14</sup>

- If he is afflicted by severe hardship or indigence, it is incumbent upon him to conceal his condition from his spiritual brothers [*ikhwān*], to the best of his ability, in case their hearts become troubled on his account, and they feel obliged to demonstrate their concern. By the same token, if he is beset with anxiety, or stricken with grief, he must not let that become apparent to his spiritual brothers.

- He must not do anything to disturb and upset his spiritual brothers, when they are in a state of happiness and good cheer, comfort and *joie de vivre*.

- If he realizes that his spiritual brothers are actually suffering from anxiety and grief, although they have been putting on a show of happiness and joy, he must encourage them outwardly to maintain the appearance of sprightliness and good cheer, while concealing from them any feelings of estrangement, sadness or worry that may be troubling him.

- He must not confront them with something they dislike, nor disagree with them over their attitude toward it.

- For the sake of good social relations, if he feels alienated by something someone says or does, it is incumbent upon him to maintain a polite conversation, while redirecting his heart toward the person concerned, so that his feeling of alienation will gradually fade away.

- He must relate to each individual as he finds him, without pushing him beyond his limit, or pressing him to conform to his own pattern. He should rather adapt himself to suit the person concerned, so long as that entails no breach of the sacred law [*sharʿ*], for, as the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

All the Prophets [*Anbiyāʿ*] have instructed us to converse with people according to their level of intelligence and understanding.

- It is incumbent upon him to relate to his subordinates with tender loving care, to his superiors with dignified respect, and to his equals with positive favor [*ifḍāl*], preferential treatment [*ithār*], and active goodness [*iḥsān*].

<sup>14</sup> For an extensive discussion of the heretical sects and their doctrines, see Vol. 1, pp. 393–446.

## Concerning the modes of behavior proper to spiritual paupers at mealtimes [*ādāb al-fuqarā' ʿinda ʾl-akl*].

As for the proprieties to be observed by spiritual paupers at mealtimes, they include the following:

- They must not eat gluttonously, nor in a state of heedlessness. On the contrary, they must remember Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) with their hearts, and not forget Him at mealtimes.

- They must not stretch their hands toward the food, before those who take precedence over them.

- They must not say, “Eat up!” to other people.

- They must not take anything from what is in front of them, and set it in front of someone else, whether as a gesture of service, or as a cheerful gesture of goodwill. This should only be done by the provider of the meal, for he is charged with that task, because it is a form of service on his part.

- They must not say to the provider of the meal: “Eat with us!”

- If one of them has been seated in a particular place, he must not choose another. He must sit where he is told to sit.

- He must not remove his hand from the food, as long as those with him are still eating, in case the provider might take it as a sign of rejection, and feel embarrassed.

- The food must not be removed from in front of the pauper, as long as he is eating, and still has his eye fixed upon it.

- He should encourage his companions to eat, provided there is no objection, even if he has no appetite for it himself.

- He must not feed morsels to anyone across the table.

- If water is offered to him, he must not reject the offering of the water bearer [*sāqī*], not even by as little as a single drop.

- If the provider of the meal stands up to be of service, the pauper must not try to restrain him. Even if he wishes to pour water over his hand, he must not restrain him.

- When dining with the rich, he must maintain a dignified detachment [*taʿazzuz*], with the poor, a readiness to offer preferential treatment [*īthār*], and with his spiritual brothers [*ikhwān*], an attitude of cheerful goodwill [*inbisāt*].

- He should not entertain the notion of eating, unless he is actually present at a meal, in which case he must eat.

- He must not encourage himself to indulge an appetite. Since what he fancies may not have been allotted to him [by destiny], which means that he can never obtain it, he risks being screened by it from Allāh (Exalted is He), and preoccupied with it to the detriment of his worshipful obedience and his vigilant awareness of his spiritual state. If he turns his back on that temptation, and concentrates on his spiritual state, he will be safe and sound. It may be, however, that something he fancies has actually been allotted to him, in which case his appetite for it will revive. Then, once he has obtained it, he must give thanks to Allāh (Exalted is He).

- He must not let eating become his main concern. He must not let his heart become attached to it, and he must not make it the subject of his conversation. In order to counter such tendencies, he should persuade his lower self [*nafs*] that it is sick, and that its condition calls for abstinence from food, drink, and carnal appetites, until it is cured of its sickness. That sickness consists of its passion, its willfulness and its desires, and the Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) is its physician and its therapist. If He sends it food and drink, by the hand of His servant, it must accept them, knowing that its cure and its well-being depend on that treatment, and on no other.

- He must concentrate on preserving the spiritual state [*ḥifẓ al-ḥāl*], on vigilant awareness, on expelling things from the heart, and ridding it of reliance and dependence on any thing—always, and in all his active and passive situations [*ḥarakāt wa sakanāt*].



## Concerning the proper modes of conduct [*ādāb*] to be observed by spiritual paupers [*fuqarāʾ*] in relation to one another [*fi mā baina-hum*].

These are some of the modes of conduct [*ādāb*] they must practice in relation to one another:

- None of them should refuse to let his companions make use of anything that belongs to him, such as articles of clothing, prayer rugs, riding animals, and so on.

- Even if one of them sets foot on his prayer rug [*sajjāda*], its owner should not take offense, though he must not set his own foot on someone else's prayer rug, nor must he spread his own prayer rug over that of someone who is above him in rank.

- Even if someone stretches his hand to touch his shoulder, he should not prevent him, though he must not stretch his own hand to touch someone else on the shoulder.

- He must not treat any of the spiritual paupers [*fuqarāʾ*] as his servant, though he must place himself at the service of each and every one of them.

- He must not squeeze the feet of his fellow paupers [*fuqarāʾ*], but if one of them wishes to squeeze his foot, he must not restrain him.

- When they enter the public steam bath [*ḥammām*], the proper conduct of the spiritual paupers [*adab al-fuqarāʾ*] does not include letting the attendant on duty massage them, but if one of them wishes to massage another, he should allow him to do so, and not restrain him.

- If a fellow pauper [*faqīr*] admires his tattered robe [*khirqā*], his prayer rug, or anything else of the kind, he must hand it over to him at once, and treat him as more deserving of it.

- He must not keep his fellow paupers [*fuqarāʾ*] waiting for him at mealtimes. In every other situation, likewise, he must do his best to avoid disturbing anyone's heart by keeping him waiting, for it is

troublesome to be kept waiting. If he wishes to provide a fellow pauper [*faqīr*] with a meal, he must not keep him in a state of expectation, because waiting for the broth is a form of humiliation.

- He should not keep anything stored away, when he could make it available.

- If the meal does not amount to very much, he should only eat the leftovers, after the others have finished.

- When he provides a meal for his fellow paupers [*fuqarā'*], he must try very hard to present it as neatly and tastefully as he possibly can.

- If he is dining in company, he should not act differently from the others, by eating one thing and not partaking of another. If he has the opportunity to share something, he should set it in the middle of the table.

- If he falls sick, while he is in company, so that he needs something special to treat his condition, it is proper for him to seek permission from the others present, before taking his medicine.

- As for the situation where he is staying at a guesthouse [*ribāṭ*] or a school [*madrasa*], in which a Shaikh is present, or an attendant is on duty, he is obliged to accept the authority [*ḥukm*] of that Shaikh, and he must not do anything without consulting him first.

- If he arrives to join a group, he must harmonize with its members in whatever activity they happen to be engaged in.

- He should not raise his voice among his fellow paupers [*fuqarā'*], when pronouncing his glorification of Allāh [*tasbīḥ*] and performing his Qur'ānic recitation. He should rather conceal that from them and keep it under his breath, or else convert it into meditation [*tafakkur*] and the practice of inner worship [*ibāda bāṭina*].

This does not apply, however, if he is one of the special élite [*khawāṣṣ*], those who are privy to the mysteries [*dhawī 'l-asrār*]. There is then no need for him to stand on ceremony, because his Lord will control him, prepare him, and tell him what to do and what not to do, in keeping with the situation. His Lord will put the hearts of the community [*jamā'a*] at his disposal, incline them toward him, and fill them, sometimes with love for him, and sometimes with awe and respect.

- It is likewise inappropriate for him to raise his voice for any other reason, when speaking in their midst.

- While he is with a particular group, it is inappropriate for him to hold a secret conversation with anyone outside the group.

- When conversing in the company of his fellow paupers [*fuqarā'*], he should refrain, as far as he can, from talking about worldly matters, foodstuffs and the like.

- He must also refrain from doing any writing in the company of his fellow paupers [*fuqarā'*], if he can possibly avoid it. He should rather concentrate on the work prescribed [*maktūb*; lit., written], meaning the supervision of his heart, the preservation of his spiritual state, and the contemplation of these two duties.

- He must not engage in numerous supererogatory devotions [*nawāfil*] in their presence.

- If the whole community [*jamā'a*] is fasting, he should fast along with them, and if they are not fasting, he should likewise act in harmony with them. He must not separate himself from them by fasting in isolation.

- He must not sleep in the company of his fellow paupers [*fuqarā'*], while they are all awake, unless slumber overwhelms him irresistibly. If that happens, he should withdraw from them and lie down to rest, as unobtrusively as possible.

- He must do his best to avoid imposing his personal wish and preference on his fellow paupers [*fuqarā'*].

- If a fellow pauper [*faqīr*] requests something of him, he must not refuse him, not even slightly, and he must not injure his heart by making him endure a lengthy wait.

- If one of them seeks his advice, he must not cut him off with a hasty response. He should rather allow him plenty of time, so that he can give full expression to all that is in his heart. Then, when he does respond, it should not be with rejection and negation. If, after hearing the whole story, he considers it to be incorrect, he must start by expressing some agreement. He should first say: "Well, that is one way of looking at it." He should then go on to explain the view that is more correct, in his opinion, and he should do so with gentle kindness, not in a harsh and frosty manner.

- While engaged in eating, they must neither praise nor criticize the meal.

## Concerning the proper modes of conduct [*ādāb*] to be observed by the spiritual pauper [*faqīr*] in relation to his wife and children.

These are some of the modes of conduct [*ādāb*] to be observed by the spiritual pauper [*faqīr*] in relation to his wife and children:

- He must relate to them on the basis of good morality [*ḥusn al-khulq*], and provide them with fair treatment [*maʿrūf*], to the best of his ability.
- If he has just enough in his possession, on a given day, to meet his daily requirements, and he needs to use that amount for immediate purposes, he should not hold anything in reserve for the morrow. If he does end up with something to spare, he must keep it for another day, but for the sake of his dependents, not for his own sake.
- He must not eat, unless they have already eaten.
- In relation to his dependents, he must be like a trusted agent [*wakīl*] and a servant, and like a slave [*mamlūk*] with his master.
- He must carry the firm conviction that, by serving his dependents, laboring to support them, and looking after their interests, he is fulfilling the commandment of Allāh, in worshipful obedience to Him.
- He must set service to himself aside, and consider his dependents more important than himself.
- When it comes to eating, he must adjust his diet to suit their tastes, and not oblige them to follow his own appetite.
- If he has in his possession some item that is useful to him in the winter, and he needs the price he can get for it in the summer, he must exchange it to meet his summertime need.
- If he finds that he has enough for the present day, to meet the needs of his dependents, and there is still time left to earn enough for the coming day, he should not concern himself with that. He should rather stop at what is sufficient for the present day, because sticking to

sufficiencies [*kifāyāt*] is a necessary duty [*wājib*], and he must postpone the management of tomorrow until tomorrow.

- If he has the strength required for absolute trust [*tawakkul*], and the patience [*ṣabr*] it takes to endure the hardship of scarcity, hunger and deprivation, but his dependents lack that kind of strength, it is not permissible for him to urge them to match his own spiritual state. He must rather bestir himself, and earn what he can for their benefit.

- If he sees that the members of his family are disposed toward obedience to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), good conduct, and worshipful service [*‘ibāda*], it is incumbent upon him to earn an income that is lawful [*ḥalāl*], and to provide them with food that is permissible [*mubāḥ*], in order to encourage that obedience and righteousness [*ṣalāh*] to grow and flourish. He must not provide them with food that is unlawful [*ḥarām*], for that would encourage the growth of disobedience and sinfulness [*junāḥ*].

- He must exert himself strenuously to improve his own behavior, his truthfulness [*ṣidq*], and the purity of his inner being [*bāṭin*], so that Allāh may improve his relations with his dependents, in terms of excellent patience, excellent obedience to himself and to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and compliance with His will. The blessed grace [*baraka*] of his righteousness will thereby accrue to his dependents, for the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has told us:

If someone improves his relationship with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), Allāh (Exalted is He) will improve his relations with his fellow human beings.

—and his family and dependents are included among his fellow human beings.

- If a guest comes to visit him, he is obliged to provide his dependents with the same fare that he offers to his guest, provided he has the capacity and ability to do so, in which case he must supply them all so abundantly that, far from being merely satisfied, they have more than enough to eat. On the other hand, if poverty, scarcity and empty-handedness prevail, and he knows that he can count on the altruism and approval of his dependents, he must give preferential treatment to his guests. Then, if there is anything left over, they can enjoy it as a blessing. Allāh (Exalted is He) will surely recompense them, and grant



them broader opportunities, for, “the guest arrives with a blessing, and carries away the sins of the household,” as we are told in the traditional saying [*ḥadīth*].

- If someone invites the spiritual pauper [*faqīr*] to a meal, when he has dependents to look after, and he does not have anything to improve their situation, it is not part of the code of chivalry [*futuwwa*] that he should neglect his dependents, go off to accept the invitation, and treat his own appetite as more important than the dire need of his dependents. Nor is it in keeping with the Spiritual Path [*Ṭarīqa*] and the Sacred Law [*Sharīʿa*] to subject one’s dependents to misery and disappointment, because of an invitation. He should therefore refrain from attending, and stay patiently at home with his family. If the person who issues the invitation has any chivalry [*futuwwa*] inside him, and he knows that the invited guest has dependents in his care, it is incumbent upon him to do more than ask him to attend in person. He must relieve the guest’s heart of concern for his dependents, by sending them enough to satisfy their needs, and by letting his guest know that he is doing so.

- It is the duty of the spiritual pauper [*faqīr*] to train his family to adhere to the outer aspect of religious knowledge [*ẓāhir al-ʿilm*] and the Sacred Law [*Sharīʿa*], and to ensure that they do not act contrary to religious knowledge, whether seldom or often.

- He must not consign his children to the marketplace, and the study of business crafts. He should rather teach them the rules and principles of the religion [*aḥkām ad-dīn*], and induce them to abstain from the pursuit of worldly interests. This does not apply, however, if he is overwhelmed by poverty, lack of patience, vulnerability, degradation, and dependence on his fellow creatures for food and everything else he needs. In such a case, it is necessary for his whole family—his wife, his children and himself—to concentrate on earning, on acquiring the means to gain independence from other people, while keeping within the limits [prescribed by the sacred law], for he should be more virtuous than others.

- He must make his children aware of the duty to respect the right of parents [*ḥaqq al-wālidain*], and to avoid undutiful behavior [*ʿuqūq*] toward them.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> As explained in an earlier section of the present work:

Undutiful treatment of one’s parents [*ʿuqūq al-wālidain*]... may mean any or all of the following: failing to respect their solemn warnings, striking them when they speak to you reproachfully, refusing to give them something when they ask you for it, or refusing to feed them when they are hungry and begging you to feed them. (See Vol. 2, p. 110.)

- He must teach his wife to respect the right of Allāh, as well as his own right [*ḥaqq*], and make her understand the virtue of patience with Him, obedience to Him, and so on, as we have explained in the chapter concerning the rules of good conduct pertaining to marriage [*ādāb an-nikāḥ*].<sup>16</sup>



<sup>16</sup>See Vol. 1, pp. 112–50.

## Concerning the proper modes of conduct [*ādāb*] to be observed by the spiritual pauper [*faqīr*] in the course of a journey.

As we have explained in an earlier section of this work, entitled The Book of Good Manners [*Kitāb al-Ādāb*],<sup>17</sup> the proper attitude to going on a journey is best described in the language of spiritual experience [*‘alā liṣāni ‘l-ma‘rifa*]. The traveler is moving away from his blameworthy characteristics [*awṣāf madhmūma*] in the direction of his praiseworthy attributes [*ṣifāt ḥamīda*], so he must leave his passions [*hawā*] behind, as he sets out to win the approval of his Master [*Mawlā*] by correcting any shortcomings in his dutiful devotion [*taqwā*].

The first obligations he must therefore discharge, when he proposes to travel away from his home town, are the following:

- He must placate his adversaries in litigation [*khuṣūm*].
- He must obtain the permission of his parents, or of other senior relatives, such as his paternal uncle [*‘amm*], maternal uncle [*khāl*], grandfather [*jadd*] and grandmother [*jadda*], to whom he owes the same kind of respect. If they grant their approval, he may embark upon his journey.
- If he has dependents in his care, and his traveling away from them would cause them serious hardship and deprivation, his journey cannot be sanctioned, until after he has improved their state of affairs, or unless he treats them as his traveling companions, and takes them along with him. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

It is sin enough for a man, to deprive those whom he ought to be sustaining.

When the spiritual pauper [*faqīr*] undertakes a journey, he does so with the stipulation that his heart must travel with him. His heart must not be hankering after some attachment left behind him, nor must his heart be attached to some attraction in front of him. Wherever he may stop along the way, his heart must always be with him.

<sup>17</sup> See Vol. 1, pp. 86–90.

His heart must be free and uncluttered by things, as illustrated by the following story, in which it is related that Ibrāhīm ibn Dawḥa said: “I once went out into the desert with Ibrāhīm ibn Shaiba, and he said to me: ‘You must throw away whatever attachments you have with you.’ I promptly discarded everything, apart from one dīnār [gold coin], so he said: ‘You must not disturb my innermost being [*sirr*]. Get rid of what you still have with you!’ I thereupon discarded the dīnār, but he said again: ‘You must throw away whatever attachments you have with you.’ I then remembered that I did have some shoelaces with me, so I threw them away, and—by Allāh!—whenever I needed a shoelace along the way, I always found one right in front of me! Ibrāhīm ibn Shaiba told me: ‘That is how it is, for someone who deals with Allāh (Exalted is He) on the basis of truthfulness [*ṣidq*].’”

In the course of his journey, he must not perform any fewer litanies [*awrād*]<sup>18</sup> than he usually performs at home. Since the journey represents an addition to his spiritual states, it is not appropriate for him to make his journey an excuse for leaving gaps in his religious practices and his spiritual states. Dispensations [*rukhaṣ*] are meant for the weak and for the common folk. It is not for the strong and the special élite [*khawāṣṣ*] to avail themselves of dispensations. The strict rule [*‘aẓīma*] is always applicable to them, in all their states and circumstances. Enabling grace [*tawfiq*] enfolds them, merciful compassion descends upon them, protection stands beside them, and safekeeping is constantly present for them. The Friend [*Ḥabīb*] is sitting in their company, and intimacy [*uns*] with Him is ever on the increase. Through Him all needs are satisfied, and through Him resources are continuously supplied. Victory for them is inevitable, and the [angelic] troops are massed in disciplined formation, obediently arrayed in their presence.

As far as their true purpose is concerned, traveling is therefore a stronger, more fitting, and worthier experience [than staying at home], since it entails distance from the material means [*asbāb*], which may become lords [*arbāb*], and from fellow creatures, who may become idols [*aṣnām*], more misleading than the [Christian] crosses [*ṣulbān*], and even worse than the Devil [*ash-Shaitān*].

It is important for the spiritual pauper [*faqīr*] to pay close attention to his heart, at the beginning of his journey, and not to start out in a state

<sup>18</sup> For a full account of the litanies [*awrād*] of the nighttime and daytime, see Vol. 4, pp. 82–109.

of heedlessness. He must also exert himself strenuously, throughout the course of his journey, to ensure that his heart does not become forgetful of his Lord.

His journey must not be undertaken for any worldly purpose, in any respect whatsoever. The purpose of his journey must rather be the fulfillment of some act of worshipful obedience [*ṭā' a mina' ṭ-ṭā' āt*], such as the Pilgrimage [*Hajj*], a meeting with a Shaikh, or a visit to one of the noble Holy Places.

If the spiritual pauper [*faqīr*] is traveling, and his heart is enraptured by a certain place, and he sees that his heart is clearer there, and less confused, and that his daily life there would be more complete, he must stay in that place. He must not move away from it, except in response to a positive command, or the action of a pure force, or a decree of destiny [*qadar*], in which case he must move on. He must do whatever he is commanded to do, and go wherever destiny sends him, assuming that he is one of those who are acted upon [*maf' ūlīn fī-him*], one of those who are no longer controlled by passion, willful inclinations and desires, one of those who are completely detached from worldly ties, and one of those who are loved and sought [*al-murādīn al-maḥbūbīn*].

If a spiritual pauper [*faqīr*] is accorded high rank and deferential treatment in a particular place, he must depart from it. He must train himself to feel acutely uncomfortable with that kind of treatment, so that it does not lead to his banishment and separation from Allāh, and to his being left with nothing but mere creatures. This only applies as long as passion [*hawā*] still exists. Once passion is defunct, creatures have no significant existence, and the treatment they accord has no effect, for they are outside of the heart. Now there are screens to shut creatures out, and guards to keep the heart safe from their intrusion, thereby denying access to polytheistic association [*shirk*], and preventing the affirmation of Divine Oneness [*tawḥīd*] from disintegrating.

It is also important for the traveler to relate to his companions on the journey in a good-natured manner and with courteous affability, avoiding confrontation and argumentativeness in all things. He should make every effort to be of service to his companions on the journey, and he should not ask any of them to act as his servant.

He should maintain a state of ritual purity [*ṭahāra*] throughout his journey, and if he cannot find water, he must perform the dry ablution

[*tayammum*].<sup>19</sup> It is incumbent upon him to do the best he can in this regard, just as it is commendable for him to maintain a state of ritual purity [*tahāra*] at home, because “the ritual ablution is the weapon of the true believer [*al-wuḍū’ silāḥ al-mu’min*],” as we are told in the traditional report [*khabar*], for it serves as his security against the devils [*shayāṭīn*] and every other harmful influence.

Especially on a journey, he should avoid the company of beardless young men, for they are often in league with the devils, whose influence inclines them to wickedness, temptations, the indulgence of passionate desire, selfish foibles, and suspicion. Their companionship poses a grave danger, unless the spiritual pauper [*faqīr*] is one of those who are guided by the example of the Shaikhs, the scholars who are versed in the knowledge of Allāh, the spiritual deputies [*abdāl*]<sup>20</sup> of His Prophets [*Anbiyā’*], the protected ones, the leaders [*a’imma*], the guides, the Lord’s own people [*rabbāniyyīn*], the teachers of goodness, the educators, those who warn and instruct their fellow creatures, the ambassadors between the Lord of Truth [*Ḥaqq*] and His creatures [*khalq*], and those with expert skills [*jahābidha*]. If he is one of these, he need not worry about those whom he befriends, whether they be young men or elders.

If he enters a town in which there is a Shaikh, he should approach him immediately, salute him with the greeting of peace [*salām*], and place himself at his service. He must look upon him with respect, modesty, and admiration, to ensure that he does not lose the benefit he could receive from him.

If he is presented with an opportunity, he must not seize it for himself, to the exclusion of his companions. If one of them cannot participate, for some compelling reason, he must stay with him, and not desert him.

Allāh is the Helpful Guide [*Muwaffiq*] to right action.



<sup>19</sup> For a detailed description of the dry ablution [*tayammum*], see Vol. 1, p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> See n. 23 on p. 92 below.

## Concerning the proper modes of conduct [*ādāb*] to be observed by spiritual paupers [*fuqarāʾ*] in relation to the spiritual concert [*samāʿ*].

These are some of the modes of conduct [*ādāb*] to be observed by spiritual paupers [*fuqarāʾ*] in relation to the spiritual concert [*samāʿ*]:

- They must not feel obliged to participate in the spiritual concert [*samāʿ*], nor should they attend it of their own accord.

- If the spiritual concert [*samāʿ*] happens to start unexpectedly in his presence, the proper course for the listener is to remain seated and practice good manners, while remembering his Lord with his heart, and concentrating on preserving his heart from the perilous onslaughts of heedlessness and forgetfulness.

- If something [in the recitation] makes him prick up his ears, he must regard the reciter of the Qurʾān as an interrogator [*mustanṭiq*], who is examining him on behalf of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), concerning the signals he is receiving from the unseen [*ghaib*], which may call for encouragement or discouragement, reassurance or reprimand, extra devotion to His service (Almighty and Glorious is He), or something else again. Whenever this happens, he must review his receiving at once, and compare the indication with it immediately. Thus, while it may seem, at the outset of the spiritual concert [*samāʿ*], as if the tongue of the Qurʾān-reciter is his own tongue, it will come to be as if He, the Lord of Truth, is uttering the words recited by the Qurʾān-reciter.

- Whenever he acts on the guidance he discovers in his inner feeling, in situations like this, the result must be consistent with the duty of servitude [*ʿubūdiyya*] and the norms of the Sacred Law. As a general principle, there is nothing, in either the Spiritual Path [*Ṭarīqa*] or the knowledge of Reality [*ʿilm al-Ḥaqīqa*], that is inconsistent with the norms of the Sacred Law [*ādāb ash-Sharīʿa*].

• If the group has a Shaikh, who is present at the spiritual concert [*samāʿ*], the spiritual pauper [*faqīr*] is obliged to stay calm and quiet, as far as he can, and to respect the dignity of that Shaikh. If he receives a compelling command [from within], he is authorized to follow the spontaneous movement arising from that rapturous receiving [*ghalaba*]. Then, as soon as the rapture subsides, it is best for him to resume his quiet state, and respect the dignity of the Shaikh.

• It is not correct for the spiritual pauper [*faqīr*] to take issue with the Qurʾān-reciter, or the chanter [*qawwāl*], if he substitutes a more familiar diction for one that is more proper, thereby adapting the Qurʾān to suit contemporary linguistic usage. For, if the participants are honest in their aspiration, their dedication and their conduct, they will not receive movements in their hearts, and in their physical limbs and organs, except through hearing the speech of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), since that is the speech of their Beloved [*Mahbūb*], and His peculiar attribute. It contains His remembrance [*dhikr*], and the remembrance of the saints [*awliyāʿ*], the moderns, the ancients, and those yet to come, the lover and the Beloved, the seeker [*murīd*] and the sought [*murād*], as well as censure and blame for those who merely pretend to love Him, and more besides.

On the other hand, if their honesty and their aspiration are flawed, and their claim is shown to be devoid of proof—if their vigorous adherence to rule and custom is without inner substance, truthfulness of conscience, intuitive understanding [*maʿrifā*], spiritual discovery [*mukāshafa*], extraordinary perceptions, awareness of the mysteries, and nearness, intimate friendship and contact with the Beloved—if it is not the genuine spiritual concert [*samāʿ*], which is the practice of listening to the Prophetic tradition [*ḥadīth*], and to speech that represents the norm [*sunna*] established by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), in the company of those who are well versed [*ʿulamaʿ*] in knowledge of Him, together with the special élite [*khawāṣṣ*], among the saints [*awliyāʿ*], the spiritual deputies [*abdāl*], and those who have attained to eminence [*aʿyān*]<sup>1</sup>—and if their inner beings [*bawāṭin*] are devoid of all that, their attention will be focused on the chanter [*qawwāl*], the stanzas and the poems, which stir the natural instincts, and stimulate the enthusiasm of the fraternal lovers [*ʿushshāq*] by exciting their natural constitution, not by touching their hearts and their spirits [*arwāḥ*].



- It is incumbent upon the pauper [*faqīr*] in general—by which I mean both the pauper whose need is for this world, and the pauper whose need is for the hereafter and the transcendent realms of being [*akwān*—to refrain from importuning the Qurʾān-reciter and the chanter [*qawwāl*] to engage in repetition and reiteration. That is something he should rather entrust to the Lord of Truth (Glory be to Him). If He so wishes, He will appoint someone to importune them on his behalf, or He may inspire the chanter [*qawwāl*] to repeat his words, if the listening pauper is sincere, and there is something to his advantage and benefit in the repetition.

- It is not appropriate for the pauper [*faqīr*] to seek assistance from others, while in the state of the spiritual concert [*samāʿ*], because that represents a weakness in the spiritual state. Nevertheless, if his fellow paupers [*fuqarāʾ*] ask him for help with the movement they are trying to follow, he should assist them.

- If the spiritual pauper [*faqīr*] is listening to a Qurʾānic verse [*āya*], or a verse of poetry [*bait*], no one ought to jostle him. He should be allowed to take his time, but if he is jostled regardless, his best course is to yield to the one who is pressing him to move.

- If the spiritual pauper [*faqīr*] keeps on moving, instead of pausing to hear the recitation of a Qurʾānic or poetic verse, he should be allowed to take his time. Even if the other participants find this distracting, and consider him to be at fault, it is their duty to pardon him and be patient with him. Then, when a reasonable time has elapsed, he should be alerted gently, or through the inner feeling, not with the tongue. This illustrates the need for strength of spiritual state, inner purity, subtle knowledge, keen awareness, perfect standards of behavior, and a laudably intense degree of heedfulness.

- If one of them casts off a tattered robe [*khirqā*], or some other article of clothing, while in the state of the spiritual concert [*samāʿ*], there are two possibilities to consider:

1. He may have intended to ingratiate himself with the Qurʾān-reciter, by dropping it at his feet, in which case it belongs specifically to the Qurʾān-reciter.

2. He may have discarded it in the middle of the room, in which case its fate will be determined by his response to the question: “What did you wish to see done with it?” If he says: “I intended to let my fellow

paupers [*fuqarā'*] decide what to do with it," that means it was a gesture of friendship toward them on his part, so it belongs to them, in the category of providential opportunities [*futūh*], and it is up to them to consider what use to make of it.

If he says: "My intention was to match the behavior of a certain Shaikh, who discarded his tattered robe [*khirqā*]," this explanation is very weak indeed. It is truly feeble, because no one is qualified to follow the Shaikh's example, when it comes to divesting himself of his tattered robe [*khirqā*], unless he has already matched the Shaikh in his ecstatic experience [*wajd*] and his spiritual state, and it is extremely unlikely that two of them would be in one and the same spiritual state. His explanation is at odds with what is customary among the spiritual paupers [*fuqarā'*], and what is nowadays their regular common practice, in the matter of discarding the tattered robe [*khirqā*]. It is therefore without foundation. Since his action sprang from his weakness, the fate of his his tattered robe [*khirqā*] must be left for that Shaikh to decide, on the basis of customary practice, not of religious knowledge [*'ilm*] and the Sacred Law [*Sharī'a*], or in accordance with the Spiritual Path [*Ṭarīqa*] and the experience of Reality [*Ḥaqīqa*].

If the owner of the tattered robe [*khirqā*] says: "My intention was to harmonize with the other people present," this explanation is even weaker than the previous one, because joint participation in action is only appropriate when there is congruity of spiritual state and ecstasy [*wajd*]. That is experienced only as a rare coincidence by the people [of the Path], until they share an equal level of mystical inebriation [*shurb*] and spiritual state. He should therefore consult the members of the group, ascertain how they deal with their tattered robes [*khirāq*], and take that as his model.

If he says: "At that moment, there was no particular purpose or intention," he should be told: "In that case, the decision is now up to you, so you may settle the matter as you see fit." It is absolutely incorrect for the others present to influence that decision, including the Shaikh, if he is in attendance, since none of them has any justification or reason for doing so, and there is no basis for it in the Spiritual Path [*Ṭarīqa*].

If he says: "At that moment, I simply received the signal to step out of the tattered robe [*khirqā*], for no specific purpose," this may well have

a basis in the Spiritual Path [*Ṭarīqa*], for the following reason: If the Sulṭān confers a robe of honor [*khil'a*] upon someone, it is incumbent upon the recipient of that honor to remove the garment he happens to be wearing, and don the robe of honor. The situation of the spiritual pauper [*faqīr*] is therefore analogous, since he is obliged to step out of his tattered robe [*khirqā*], and don what has been conferred upon him by the Maker [*Bārī*] (Almighty and Glorious is He), in the way of radiant lights, nearness, and gracious favors.

As for the disposal of his tattered robe [*khirqā*], that should then be decided by the Shaikh, if he is in attendance. If not, the spiritual paupers [*fuqarā'*] who are present should assign the task to the Qur'ān-reciter or the chanter [*qawwāl*]. According to some, however, the decision should be left to the spiritual pauper [*faqīr*] concerned, since he is better qualified than others to determine the fate of his tattered robe [*khirqā*].

As another alternative, the worldly types who are present may offer to buy the tattered robe [*khirqā*], and then return it to its owner, but this is not commendable in the Spiritual Path [*Ṭarīqa*]. It is not an acceptable solution—O Allāh [*Allāhumma*]!—unless the buyer has an element of chivalry [*futuwwa*] within him, and some faith in the people [of the Spiritual Path], with whom he wishes to ingratiate himself. In that case, it could be seen as a kind of recompense, and a way of requesting favorable treatment. It is very reprehensible, nevertheless, considering the nature of the spiritual pauper's experience. By shedding his tattered robe [*khirqā*], in the state he was in at the time, he demonstrated his genuine commitment to the spiritual state. It would be a shameful act on his part, amounting to calling himself a liar, if he were to resume the tattered robe [*khirqā*], so that cannot be an acceptable solution.

It is never appropriate, for one who has stepped out of his tattered robe [*khirqā*], to recover it and resume wearing it. If he receives a signal from a Shaikh, instructing him to take it back, he should take and wear it in public, in compliance with the Shaikh's command. He should then divest himself of it, later on, and give it as a friendly gift to someone else.

If something is dropped the middle of the room, for the benefit of the congregation, it should be distributed among them equally. If a Shaikh

is in attendance, and he sees fit to specify a particular group, or a single individual among those present, the Shaikh is entitled to make that decision, and his opinion must be respected.

If a participant discards his tattered robe [*khirqā*], only to have it returned to him—contrary to the rule of his own Spiritual Path [*Ṭarīqa*], which requires him not to revert to anything he has discarded—and if the other spiritual paupers [*fuqarāʾ*] resume their tattered robes [*khirqā*], how should he handle the situation? The answer depends on whether or not he has a Shaikh. If he does have a Shaikh, he is entitled to refrain from reverting to his tattered robe [*khirqā*], and to stick to his own Spiritual Path [*Ṭarīqa*], instead of violating his own spiritual state, by conforming to the states of the other members of the congregation. If, on the other hand, he is simply an individual among the spiritual paupers [*fuqarāʾ*], the most graceful course for him to take, and the one best suited to his spiritual state, is for him to act in harmony with the state of the congregation. He should therefore revert to his tattered robe [*khirqā*], so as not to offend and embarrass the group, and thereby incur their displeasure. Then, later on, he should leave it behind for the other participants. That is the best course, though it is also permissible for him to hand it over to someone who was absent from the session.



## Conclusion

This brings us to the end of the material we have managed to compile, briefly and succinctly, and under the constraints of time, concerning the modes of conduct [*ādāb*] proper to the people [of the Spiritual Path].

As for matters connected with admission to their guesthouses [*rubuṭ*, pl. of *ribāṭ*], their water-bearing practices [*siqāyāt*], their style of footwear, and various things they have invented, fashioned and named among themselves, those subjects are best explored by observing their actual practice, spending time in their company, and asking them to explain and demonstrate, so we have not recorded them in this section of the book. We have discussed most of these topics, however, in the section entitled The Book of Good Manners [*Kitāb al-Ādāb*].<sup>21</sup>

We shall now conclude this book with a final chapter, devoted to the sacred struggle [*mujāhada*], absolute trust [*tawakkul*], goodness of moral character [*ḥusn al-khulq*], thankfulness [*shukr*], patience [*ṣabr*], contentment [*riḍā*], and truthfulness [*ṣidq*]. These seven items form the foundation of this Spiritual Path [*Ṭarīqa*], and all of them are highly beneficial.



<sup>21</sup> See Vol. 1, pp. 53–150 and 297–389.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### Concerning the sacred struggle [*mujāhada*].

As for the sacred struggle [*mujāhada*], the basic guidance on the subject is contained in His words (Almighty and Glorious is He):

And as for those  
who strive in Our cause,  
surely We shall guide them  
in Our ways. (29:69)

*wa 'llādhīna  
jāhadū fī-nā  
la-nahdiyanna-hum  
subula-nā.*

According to the report of Abū Naḍra, it was Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) who said: “When Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) was asked to describe the most meritorious form of sacred combat [*jihād*], he replied:

‘A word of truth in the presence of a tyrannical ruler.’”

Abū Naḍra added: “The eyes of Abū Sa'īd (may Allāh be well pleased with him) were filled with tears, [when he repeated these words of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace)].

Abū 'Alī ad-Daqqāq (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) once said: “If the servant adorns his outer being [*ẓāhir*] with sacred struggle [*mujāhada*], Allāh will beautify his innermost faculties [*sarā'ir*] with direct perception [*mushāhada*], for Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has told us:

And as for those  
who strive in Our cause,  
surely We shall guide them  
in Our ways. (29:69)

*wa 'llādhīna  
jāhadū fī-nā  
la-nahdiyanna-hum  
subula-nā.*

—and if any seeker is not dedicated to sacred struggle [*ṣāhib mujāhada*] during his initial stage, he will never experience anything of value on the Spiritual Path [*Ṭarīqa*].”

It was Abū 'Uthmān al-Maghribī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon

him) who said: “If anyone supposes that anything will be opened up for him on this Spiritual Path [*Ṭarīqa*], or that anything connected with it will be revealed to him, without steadfast commitment to the sacred struggle [*mujāhada*], he is seriously mistaken.”

Abū ‘Alī ad-Daqqāq (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) once said: “If someone does not perform a single act of standing up [*qawma*] during his initial stage, he will not experience a single act of sitting down [*jalsa*] in his final stage.”

He also said (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him): “Movement is a blessing [*al-ḥaraka baraka*]. The movements of the outer bodies [*ḥarakāt aḡ-ḡawāhir*] give rise to the blessings of the innermost beings [*barakāt as-sarā’ir*].”

According to al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alawiyya, it was Abū Yazīd (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) who said: “For twelve years I was the doorman of my lower self [*nafs*], and for five years I was the mirror of my heart. Then I devoted one year to self-examination, and I noticed a girdle [*ḡunnār*]<sup>22</sup> around my waist, so I worked at cutting it loose for the next twelve years. Then I examined myself again, and noticed a girdle [*ḡunnār*] inside my inner being [*bāṭin*], so I worked at cutting it loose for the next five years. I kept trying to see how I needed to do the cutting, until the answer dawned upon me. I looked at my fellow creatures, and saw them as dead, so I pronounced over them four *takbīrāt* [declarations of Allāh’s Supreme Greatness].”<sup>22a</sup>

We are told that al-Junaid (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) once said: “I heard as-Sarī [*as-Saqāṭī*] (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) say: ‘O all you young men, you must make serious efforts now, before you get to my age, for by then you will be too weak, and you will fall short, as I have fallen short.’ At the time he said this, the young men were not joining him in worshipful service [*‘ibāda*].”

<sup>22</sup> The *ḡunnār*, a kind of girdle or waistband traditionally worn by non-Muslims (especially Christians) was often used by Islamic authors as a symbol of imperfect faith. In the Forty-third Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faḥ ar-Rabbānī]*,\* Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) says:

There is nothing to be said until you cut the waistband [*ḡunnār*], renew your Islām, truly repent with your heart, and leave the house of your natural urges [*tab’*], your passions [*hawā*], your existence [*wujūd*], and your efforts to attract benefit to you and repel harm from you.

(\*See p. 278 of the edition published by Al-Baz.)

<sup>22a</sup> This a reference to the Islāmic funeral service [*aḡ-ḡalāt ‘ala ’l-jināza*]. (For a detailed account thereof, see Vol. 4, pp. 272–80.)

It was al-Ḥasan al-Qazzāz (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) who said: “This business is built on three things: (1) that you do not eat, unless you really need to; (2) that you do not sleep, unless slumber overwhelms you; and (3) that you do not speak, except in response to an emergency.”

Ibrāhīm ibn Ad’ham (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) once said: “A man will never attain to the degree of the righteous [*ṣāliḥīm*], unless he traverses these six obstacles: First of all, he must lock the door of plenty, and open the door of hardship. Secondly, he must lock the door of dignity, and open the door of humility. Thirdly, he must lock the door of comfort, and open the door of strenuous effort. Fourthly, he must lock the door of sleep, and open the door of wakefulness. Fifthly, he must lock the door of wealth, and open the door of poverty. Sixthly, he must lock the door of hopeful expectation, and open the door of preparation for death.”

Abū ‘Umar ibn Najīd (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) once said: “If a person is honored by his own lower self [*nafs*], his religion [*dīn*] will regard him as utterly insignificant.”

It was Abū ‘Alī ar-Rūdhbārī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) who said: “If, after five days, the Ṣūfī says: “I am hungry,” you must confine him to the marketplace, and tell him to earn a livelihood.”

Dhu’n-Nūn al-Miṣrī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) once said: “Allāh does not dignify a servant of His with any dignity more dignified in His sight, than when He guides him to self-humiliation. Nor does Allāh humiliate a servant of His with any humiliation more humiliating in His sight, than when He prevents him from practicing self-humiliation.”

Ibrāhīm al-Khawwāṣ (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) once said: “Whenever something terrifies me, I mount it like a riding animal.”

It was Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) who said: “True comfort is freedom from the desires of the lower self [*nafs*].”

Manṣūr ibn ‘Abdi’llāh (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) once said: “I heard Abū ‘Alī ar-Rūdhbārī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) say: ‘Spiritual damage is caused by three things: (1) the sickness of the natural constitution [*ṭabī‘a*], (2) sticking to habitual custom



[‘*āda*], and (3) keeping bad company [*ṣuḥba*].’ When I asked him: ‘What is the sickness of the natural constitution? he replied: ‘The consumption of unlawful food [*ḥarām*].’ When I asked him: ‘What is meant by sticking to habitual custom? he replied: ‘Looking at things that are unlawful [*ḥarām*], and lending an ear to backbiting [*ghība*].’ When I asked him: ‘What is keeping bad company? he replied: ‘Every time a lustful appetite arises in the lower self [*nafs*], and you go along with it.’”

It was an-Nuṣrābādhī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) who said: “Your prison is your own lower self [*nafs*]. As soon as you escape from it, you will alight in the comfort of eternity [*rāḥat al-abad*].”

Abu’l-Ḥasan al-Warrāq (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) once said: “In the early stages of our [spiritual] business, in the mosque [*masjid*] of Abū ‘Uthmān, the most important of our principles [*aḥkām*] was that priority should be accorded to what was being freshly revealed to us [*yuftaḥu ‘alai-nā*], and that we should not get stuck on anything familiar. If someone confronted us with something disagreeable, instead of trying to avenge ourselves on him, we had to be apologetic toward him, and relate to him with an attitude of modest humility. If a feeling of contempt for someone invaded our hearts, we had to stand ready to be of service to him.”

The sacred struggle of the common folk [*mujāhadat al-‘awāmm*] resides in the fulfillment of good deeds [*tawfiyat al-a‘māl*], whereas the sacred struggle of the special élite [*mujāhadat al-khawāṣṣ*] resides in the purification of spiritual states [*taṣfiyat al-aḥwāl*]. It is relatively easy to bear the hardship of hunger, thirst, and having to stay awake. What is really tough and difficult is applying the treatment necessary to correct bad moral habits.



## Concerning some of the spiritual dangers posed by the lower self [*āfāt an-nafs*].

**A**mong the spiritual dangers posed by the lower self [*āfāt an-nafs*], one is its dependence on acquiring praise, a good reputation, and the approval of fellow creatures. To that end, it is even prepared to endure the burdens imposed by acts of worshipful service [*‘ibādāt*]. In order to do so, it must resort to ostentation [*riyā’*] and hypocrisy [*nifāq*]. The symptom of this is apparent in its return to laziness and indifference, as soon as the performance is over, along with the risk of criticism from other people.

You will not become clearly aware of the spiritual dangers posed by your lower self [*nafs*], its polytheistic association [*shirk*], its pretension and its falsehood, unless you undergo a process of intense examination and assessment, designed to probe the roots of its pretentious behavior. This is because it will speak in the manner of the fearful, as long as you are not compelled to experience fear, but if you need it [to respond correctly] in situations where fear is appropriate, you will find it feeling comfortably secure. It will speak in the manner of the righteous [*abrār*], as long as you are not being tested for true devotion [*taqwā*], but if you need it then, and call upon it to satisfy the preconditions of true devotion [*taqwā*], you will find it polytheistic [*mushrika*], hypocritically ostentatious [*murā’iya*], and vainly conceited [*mu’jaba*]. It will seem to fit the description of those who truly understand [*‘arīfīn*], as long as you do not need to explain what something really means, but if you ask it to supply that information, you will find it telling lies. It will pretend to be one of those who are genuinely certain [*mūqīnīn*] of their claim, as long as you are not tested for sincerity [*ikh-lās*]. It will insist that it is one of those who are modestly unassuming [*mutawāḍi‘īm*], as long as it is not presented with opposition to its passionate desire, in an anger-provoking situation.

It will likewise lay claim to generosity, magnanimity, altruism, liberality, affluence, chivalry [*futuwwa*], and other such praiseworthy characteristics—the characteristics of the saints [*awliyā'*], the spiritual deputies [*abdāl*],<sup>23</sup> and the spiritually eminent [*a'yān*—from motives of desire, frivolity and foolishness. If you demand proof of all that, and put it to the test, you will find that it resembles nothing more than the mirage [*sarāb*] of an oasis, which the thirsty traveler supposes to be water, until he reaches it and finds that it is really nothing at all. If there had been any truthfulness [*ṣidq*] and sincerity [*ikhlāṣ*] present, if its word had indeed been correct, and its tongue had spoken the truth, it would not have put on a fancy display, designed to impress mere creatures, who have no power to cause it either harm or benefit. Its actions would have been appropriate, under the test conditions, and its words would have matched its deeds.

Abū Ḥafṣ (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) once said: “The lower self [*nafs*] is total darkness, but for the lamp of its innermost being [*sirr*]—meaning sincere devotion [*ikhlāṣ*]—and the light of its lamp is enabling guidance [*tawfiq*]. So, if someone is not accompanied, in his innermost being, by enabling guidance from his Lord, his lower self is total darkness.”

It was Abū 'Uthmān (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) who said: “No one can see his own fault, as long as he approves of anything connected with his lower self [*nafs*]. To be able to see his own fault, a person must view his lower self with deep suspicion, in all his states and circumstances.”

Abū Ḥafṣ (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) also said: “The swiftest of all people to perish is he who does not acknowledge his own fault, for sinful acts of disobedience are the postal service of unbelief [*barīd al-kufr*].”

Abū Sulaimān (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) once said: “Whenever I have been pleased with myself for doing something, I have been taken to task for it.”

<sup>23</sup> *Abdāl* is the plural of *Badal*. In the Sixth Discourse of *Revelations of the Unseen*, Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) gives the following explanation: “Annihilation [*fanā'*] is the aim and object, the final destination of the journey of the saints. This was the direction sought by all previous saints and *Abdāl*: to become extinct to their own will, and let the will of the Almighty and Glorious Truth take its place, as a permanent transformation, lasting until death. That is why they came to be called *Abdāl* [lit: 'substitutes'] (may Allāh be well pleased with them all).”

It was as-Sarī [as-Saqāṭī] (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) who said: “Beware of the protégés of the rich, the Qur’ān-reciters [*qurrā’*] who frequent the marketplaces, and the scholarly experts [*‘ulamā’*] who serve the worldly rulers.”

Dhu’n-Nūn al-Miṣrī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) once said: “Corruption has entered people’s moral fiber by way of six things:

1. Weakness of the intention [*niyya*] to work for the sake of the hereafter.
2. Their physical bodies have been taken hostage by their carnal appetites.
3. Far-reaching expectation [*tūl al-amal*], despite the nearness of the appointed term [*qurb al-ajal*];
4. They have sought the approval of their fellow creatures, instead of the good pleasure of the Creator.
5. They have followed their desires, and discarded the exemplary practice of their Prophet [*Sunna Nabiyyi-him*] (Allāh bless him and give him peace), dumping it behind their backs.
6. They have pointed to a few mistakes committed by their righteous forebears [*salaf*], as evidence to justify their own misconduct, while burying many of the noble exploits and virtues of their predecessors.”



## Concerning the basic ingredient of the sacred struggle [*mujāhada*].

The basic ingredient of the sacred struggle [*mujāhada*] is opposition to passionate desire [*hawā*]. The spiritual warrior must therefore wean his lower self [*nafs*] from familiar habits, carnal appetites, and the pleasures of the flesh. He must set it in opposition to whatever it may desire, at every moment in time. If it threatens to become engrossed in lustful appetites, he must restrain it with the reins of pious devotion [*taqwā*] and the fear of offending Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). If it is stubbornly obstinate, and stops short of performing acts of worshipful obedience [*ṭā'āt*] and dutiful compliance [*muwāfaqāt*], he must goad it with the whips of fear, opposition to desire, and the withholding of luxuries [*ḥuzūz*].



## Concerning the vigilant awareness [*murāqaba*] that is essential to the fulfillment of the sacred struggle [*mujāhada*].

The sacred struggle [*mujāhada*] cannot be complete without vigilant awareness [*murāqaba*]. It was to this that Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) implicitly referred, when he asked Gabriel [*Jibrīl*] (peace be upon him) to explain the meaning of active goodness [*iḥsān*], and he replied: “Active goodness [*iḥsān*] means that you must worship Allāh as if you could see Him, for, if you do not see Him, He certainly sees you.”

Vigilant awareness [*murāqaba*] is the servant’s recognition of the fact that he is always under the scrutinizing gaze of the Lord (Glory be to Him). When he maintains that recognition constantly, he is practicing vigilant awareness [*murāqaba*] of his Lord, and this is the root of all goodness. The servant only attains to this degree after self-examination [*muḥāsaba*], timely correction of his spiritual state, strict adherence to the path of Truth [*ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq*], maintaining good relations between the heart and Allāh (Exalted is He), and taking care of every breath he breathes in the company of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). He must realize that Allāh (Exalted is He) is Watching [*Raqīb*] over him, and that He is Near [*Qarīb*] to his heart, so that He knows his spiritual states, observes his actions, and hears his words.

Before your vigilance can be complete, you must also be thoroughly familiar with four kinds of direct experience [*ma’rifā*], namely:

1. Direct experience of Allāh (Exalted is He).
2. Direct experience of Iblīs, the enemy of Allāh.
3. Direct experience of your own lower self [*nafs*], the inciter to evil [*al-ammāra bi’s-sū’*].
4. Direct experience of working for the sake of Allāh (Exalted is He).

Even if a person devoted a whole lifetime to worshipful service [*‘ibāda*], with earnest dedication, but without being familiar with these four, and acting upon them, he would derive no benefit from his worshipful service. He would be in ignorance, and his ultimate destination would be the Fire of Hell, unless Allāh (Exalted is He) bestowed His grace upon him, through His merciful compassion.



## Direct experience [*ma'rifā*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

As for the direct experience [*ma'rifā*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), the servant can only obtain it by keeping his heart focused on His nearness (Almighty and Glorious is He), His control over him, His power over him, His witnessing of him, and His knowledge of him, never letting it forget that:

- He is an Ever-Watchful Guardian [*Raqīb Ḥafīẓ*], a Glorious Being [*Wājid Mājid*], One who has no partner in His Dominion [*Mulk*].
- He is always Truthful [*Ṣādiq*] when He makes a promise, Loyal [*Wāfin*] when he gives a guarantee, and Opulent [*Malī'*] when He is appealed to and petitioned.
- He has a promise [*wa'd*] that He will surely carry out, and an honest threat [*wa'id*] that He will surely implement.
- He has an abode to which all His creatures must come, and a source from which he disposes freely.
  - He has the power to reward and to punish.
  - He has no likeness and no equal.
  - He is Protective [*Kāfin*], Compassionate [*Rahīm*], Loving [*Wadūd*], All-Hearing [*Samī'*], and All-Knowing [*'Alīm*].
  - Every day, He is about some awesome business [*Huwa fī sha'n*].
  - No business distracts Him from any other business.
  - His knowledge extends to what is concealed [*khaḥīf*], and beyond what is concealed, for He knows and understands the hidden conscience [*ḍamīr*], the secret thoughts [*khaṭarāt*], the devilish insinuation [*waswasa*], the ambitious aspiration [*hīmma*], the wish and intention [*irāda*], the wicked temptation [*waswās*], the motion [*ḥaraka*], the blink [*ṭarfa*], the wink [*ghamza*], and the click in the throat [*hamza*], as well as everything higher and lower on the scale, including things too subtle for us to identify, and too sublime for us to describe, whether they have already happened, or have yet to come into being.



- He is All-Glorious [*‘Azīz*], All-Wise [*Hakīm*].<sup>24</sup>

The servant must therefore instill this in his heart, through deep-rooted certainty and beneficial action, and it must also be instilled in every limb and organ of his body, in every joint, every vein, every nerve, every hair, and every patch of skin. He must likewise be convinced that Allāh (Exalted is He) is supervising the whole process, in full awareness of it, for He surrounds him with a knowledge that no detail can escape. He must be convinced that He created him, and created him well, and that He formed him, and formed him well.

Once all of that is firmly established in his heart, so that his commitment to it is unshakable, his understanding is complete, and self-examination [*muḥāsaba*] has become a constant process within him, he will then receive the direct experience [*ma‘rifat*], the proof will present itself to him, and he will occupy a noble station with respect to Allāh.

He must be convinced that protection accompanies him in all of this, so his physical organs and his heart are safeguarded. He will obtain nothing from this whole endeavor, unless he abandons all concerns, apart from that which led him to embark upon it in the first place. He must not detach himself from his heart, in order to be on guard against frightening dangers, because His power will take care of him now, as it has in the past, and because of a sense of shame toward Him, on account of His nearness. He must realize that no wish, intention or thought occurs to him, without His knowing all about it.

He will thus become that knowledgeable expert [*‘ālim*] who practices what Allāh loves, and abstains from what He loathes. He will not give expression to a thought, a glance, a notion, a wish, or a movement, unless the knowledge [*‘ilm*] of Allāh is with him, present in his heart, before he expresses any thoughts, or movements, or ideas. This is the spiritual station of those who are well versed in the knowledge of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), those who are afraid of His displeasure, those who learn by direct experience [*‘arīfīn*], those who are truly devout [*atqiyā’*], and those who exercise pious restraint [*wari‘īn*].

<sup>24</sup> At this point in the Arabic text, the author (may Allāh be well pleased with him) reminds the reader: “We have already provided a full account of this whole subject, in the chapter concerning the knowledge of the Creator [*ma‘rifat aṣ-Ṣāni‘*].” (See Vol. 1, pp. 171–294.)

## Direct experience [*maʿrifa*] of Iblīs.

As for the direct experience [*maʿrifa*] of Allāh’s enemy, Iblīs, Allāh (Exalted is He) has commanded His servants to wage war on him and struggle against him, in private and in public, whether they are in a state of worshipful obedience, or in a state of sin. Allāh has informed His servants that Iblīs displayed hostility toward Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), in relation to Adam (peace be upon him), His servant, His Prophet [*Nabī*], His chosen friend [*ṣafī*], and His deputy [*khalīfa*] on the earth, and that he injured him by harming his offspring. He has informed them that Iblīs does not sleep, when the human being [*ādamī*] is asleep, that he does not become absent-minded, when the human being is absent-minded, and that he does not lose consciousness, when the human being loses consciousness, during his sleep or while he is awake.

Iblīs is dedicated to the ruination and destruction of the human being. He misses no opportunity to cheat, deceive and trick him, and his snares are the lustful appetites, which tempt both the pious and the sinful. His real purpose is unknown to many of the creatures of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), including those worshipful servants who are deluded and deceived, as well as many of those who are heedless. The real object of his desire is not merely to lure the human being [*ibn Ādam*] into sinful disobedience, or hypocritical display [*riyāʿ*], or vain conceit. His real purpose is to take the son of Adam back home with him to Hell [*Jahannam*]. As Allāh (Glorious and Exalted is He) has told us:

<p>[The Devil] summons his party only that they may be among the inhabitants of the blazing inferno. (35:6)</p>	<p><i>innamā yadʿū</i> <i>ḥizba-hu</i> <i>li-yakūnūā</i> <i>min aṣḥābi ʿs-saʿīr.</i></p>
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Once the servant has truly recognized [*ʿarafa*] Iblīs in this capacity, it is therefore incumbent upon him to instill that direct experience

[*ma'rifā*] in his heart, as a real and profound awareness, with no trace of heedlessness or absent-mindedness. He must wage all-out war on him, and engage in the sacred struggle [*mujāhada*] against him, with the utmost intensity, in private and in public, outwardly and inwardly. He must pursue this without respite, so that he spares no effort in his combat with him, and in his struggle to resist whatever temptation he may offer, whether it be good or evil.

He must not refrain from appealing to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), seeking refuge with Him, and asking Him for help in all his operations and maneuvers, so that He will assist him against the foe. He must show Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) that he admits his own inadequacy, and his urgent need of Him, for there is no effective strategy [*hīla*], nor any strength, except through Him. He must seek the aid of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) through weeping and entreaty, and beg Him for support against the foe, in all earnestness and humility, by night and by day, inwardly and outwardly, in private and in public.

His struggle will thus become less daunting in his sight, due to his familiarity [*ma'rifā*] with the foe, obtained through the enabling guidance [*tawfiq*] of Allāh (Exalted is He), for Iblīs is the enemy of his Master [*Mawlā*]. Of all His creatures, he was the first to disobey Allāh. Of all His creatures, meaning all those who disobey Him, he was also the first to die, for everyone who disobeys Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is dead. As we learn from the tradition [*ḥadīth*], Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

The first to die, of all My creatures, was Iblīs.

Iblīs has also directed his hostility toward the saints [*awliyā'*] of Allāh, including the Prophets [*Anbiyā'*], the champions of truth [*ṣiddīqīm*], and His chosen friends [*aṣfiyā'*] among all of His creatures.

The servant must know and understand that he is engaged in a tremendous holy war [*jihād*], that he is in a state of nearness to the Lord (Glorious is His Splendor), and that the honor of his station cannot be described. He must therefore remain steadfast, and not weaken, for if he grows weak or weary, he is likely to disobey his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), fall into Hell [*Jahannam*], and incur the wrath of Allāh. He may grant Allāh's enemy what he wishes from him, and strengthen Allāh's curse upon him.

Iblīs has no purpose, object or goal, with regard to the servant [of the Lord], other than disbelief [*kufir*] in Allāh. He simply transports him from one state to another, until Allāh becomes angry with him. Then he leaves him to his own devices, so he perishes, and falls into the Fire of Hell, in the company of Satan [*ash-Shaiṭān*]. No other creature treats the servant more harshly than he does. So beware, beware! The only alternatives are ending in destruction, or salvation through the grace and mercy of Allāh.

May Allāh grant refuge to us, and to all the Muslims, from the wickedness of Iblīs and his troops. There is no might, nor any power, except with Allāh, the All-High, the Almighty [*lā ḥawla wa lā quwwata illā bi'llāhi 'l-'Alīyi 'l-'Aẓīm*].



**Direct experience [*ma'rifā*] of the self that  
is always inciting to evil [*an-nafs  
al-ammāra bi's-sū'*].**

**A**s for direct experience [*ma'rifā*] of the self that is always inciting to evil [*an-nafs al-ammāra bi's-sū'*], it means that the servant must put that self where Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has put it, describe it as Allāh (Exalted is He) has described it, and treat it as Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has commanded him to treat it, for it is even more hostile toward him than Iblīs himself. Iblīs depends on it, and its willingness to accept his control, as the only means by which he can influence him.

The servant must therefore learn by experience to identify its natural constitution, its aim and purpose, and the end to which it is directing him, by inducement and incitement. He must recognize how weak is its moral character, and how strong its greedy ambition and arrogant presumption. It has no interest in obedience to Allāh (Glory be to Him), but only in possessiveness and wishfulness. The only fear it knows is actually a false sense of security [*amn*], and its hope is pinned on nothing but desires [*amānī*]. Its honesty is untruthful, and its claim is null and void. Everything about it is deceptive, nothing it does is worthy of praise, and nothing it claims is ever true, so he must not be deluded by anything it manifests to him, nor must he share the hopes it entertains.

If he loosens its shackles, it will run amok. If he unties its fetters, it will bolt. If he gives it whatever it asks for, it will perish. If he neglects to keep it under close examination [*muhāsaba*], it will slip away. If he is incapable of subjecting it to opposition, it will drown. If he gives free rein to its passionate desire, it will head for the Fire of Hell, and tumble into its flames. It has no sense of reality [*haqīqa*], and no recourse to anything good. It is the prime cause of misfortune, the main source of

degradation, the treasure house of Iblīs, and the refuge of everying bad.

No one really knows and understands it, other than its Creator (Almighty and Glorious is He), for it exists in the capacity assigned to it by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). Whenever it manifests a kind of fear, it is actually feeling a sense of security. Whenever it claims that something is true, it is actually false. Whenever it refers to its own sincerity [*ikhhlās*], it is actually a display of hypocrisy [*riyā'*] and vain conceit, for when the facts are presented, and their truth is evident, its falsehood can be recognized. When put to the test, it reverts to its pretension.

There is no grave misfortune that has not occurred because of it, so the servant must subject it to examination [*muḥāsaba*], vigilant awareness [*murāqaba*], opposition [*mukhālafa*], and dedicated struggle [*mujāhada*], with regard to everything it promotes and becomes involved in. No claim it makes is ever true. It is simply striving to achieve its own destruction and ruination. Whenever something is attributed to it, there is always more to it than what has been described, for it is the treasure of Iblīs, his place of comfort, his entertainer, his conversation partner, and his friend. Once the servant is fully aware of its character, so that he really knows and understands it, he will find it easy to deal with, and he will have it under control, with the help of Allāh (Exalted is He).

When the servant has acquired these three good habits,<sup>25</sup> he must ask Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) for help in maintaining them. He must not be negligent, and he must not obey his own lower self [*nafs*], because if he succeeds in training his lower self, and denying it what it desires, he will go on to master all the good habits, if Allāh (Exalted is He) so wills.

He must therefore accord priority to firm reliance on Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), Alone without partner. He must not incline, in all of this, toward anyone but Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), for if he does that, he will not achieve a good result, and Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will leave him to his own devices. It is therefore incumbent upon him to seek help from Allāh (Exalted is He) in all of this, and to win His approval by doing whatever Allāh commands him to do, and refraining from whatever He forbids him to do.

<sup>25</sup> That is to say, the three habits mentioned above, in the paragraph beginning: "As for direct experience of the self..."

His object must be to please no one but Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), for then Allāh will guide him, assist him, love him, shield him from the things he hates, and cover him with the protection of His chosen friends [*aṣfiyā'*], those who are well versed in the knowledge of Allāh, because through this very process they have attained to the knowledge of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).



## Direct experience [*ma'rifā*] of working for the sake of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

As for working for the sake of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), it means that the servant must know and understand that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has commanded him to do certain things, and that He has forbidden him to do certain things. That which He has commanded him to practice is worshipful obedience [*tā'ā*], and that which He has forbidden him to perpetrate is sinful disobedience toward Him (Almighty and Glorious is He). He has also commanded him to practice sincere devotion [*ikhhlāṣ*] in both cases, and to follow the path of right guidance [*hudā*], in accordance with the Book [of Allāh] and the Sunna [the exemplary practice of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace)].

In everything the servant does, his conscience [*ḍamīr*] must be clear of everything other than Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). He must not be one of those who abstain from external acts of disobedience, but refuse to abstain from internal acts of disobedience, which are the mothers of all sins [*ummahāt adh-dhunūb*], and the roots from which they spring, because Allāh (Exalted is He) is not bound by any promise of forgiveness, in that case, nor by any guarantee of reward in the abode of recompense [in the hereafter].

It is therefore pointless for the servant to apply great effort to the external performance of worshipful service [*'ibāda*], while the intention [*niyya*] is invalid and the purpose is unsound, for all his apparently worshipful obedience is thereby converted into sinful disobedience. This will bring him nothing but the punishments of this world and the hereafter, along with physical exhaustion, little wish-fulfillment, and the forsaking of carnal appetite and pleasure, so he will lose both this world and the hereafter.

He must rather adorn his worshipful obedience with sincerity [*ikhhlāṣ*],



true devotion [*taqwā*] and pious restraint [*wara'*], and his intention [*niyya*] with truthfulness [*ṣidq*], while keeping his purpose intact through self-examination [*muḥāsaba*]. His concern must be focused on the quest for truthful intention, and his energy applied to the quest for sincerity and the affirmation of Oneness [*tawḥīd*], in all his words and deeds, and in all his states and circumstances, while he holds fast to worshipful obedience, and steers well clear of sinful disobedience. He must keep this up, until direct experience of the intention [*ma'rifat an-niyya*] is firmly established, just as direct experience of the work of religious practice [*ma'rifat al-'amal*] is firmly established.

He must also remain on guard, to ensure that the accursed Iblīs does not deceive him with his cunning wiles, trip him with his snares, lure him into his traps, and carry him off through his cunning and treachery, for he has snares installed in our hearts, along with charming and enticing lures. To the ignorant, Iblīs seems to offer light and certainty, when it is really doubt and darkness. He opens a hundred doors of worshipful obedience, with the intention of luring the servant into a most abysmal situation, where his work will sink to the depths. So let the servant beware, and again beware! Let him exercise caution, and still more caution! If he is able to study the tricks of Iblīs, just as he studies the Qur'ān, let him do so, for this is what Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has commanded him to do. The servant must beware of Iblīs in his worshipful obedience, just as he must beware of him in relation to his acts of disobedience.

If some notion occurs to his mind, or if his lower self [*nafs*] invites him to undertake something, or prompts him to embark upon some course of action, he must not respond in haste, without full understanding and knowledge. He must treat his lower self [*nafs*] politely, practice the calm deliberation [*tarassul*] of the religious scholars [*'ulamā'*], and attend the sessions of the experts in Islāmic jurisprudence [*fuqahā'*—those who are well versed in the knowledge of Allāh, His commandments and His prohibitions—so that they may guide him to the path of (Almighty and Glorious is He), give him the instruction he needs, and show him how his illnesses can be diagnosed and cured.<sup>26</sup> He must not be deluded by

<sup>26</sup> At this point in the Arabic text, the author (may Allāh be well pleased with him) reminds the reader: "We have already provided a full account of this subject, in the Discourse on Repentance [*Majlis at-Tawba*]." (For the discourse concerned, see Vol. 2, pp. 105–208.)

the apparent virtue of lengthy night vigil [*qiyām*], frequent fasting [*ṣiyām*], and external performance of supererogatory devotions [*nawāfil*], when he has no real understanding [*maʿrifa*] of these practices.

If he takes all this advice, and considers his action with the understanding obtained through direct experience [*maʿrifa*] of his own lower self [*nafs*], of his Lord [*Rabb*], and of His enemy, his action will be correct, for he will thus be endowed with real knowledge [*ʿilm*] and comprehension [*fiqh*]. Whenever he contemplates an action, be it external [*ẓāhir*] or internal [*bāṭin*], he must check to see whether it is intended for the sake of Allāh, sincerely and truthfully, for only then will Allāh accept it of him, and reward him for it. If it is not performed for His sake alone, He will send it back to him, for no such action reaches Him unnoticed, and nothing is hidden from Him.

If the servant acts on this advice, he will be granted every good attribute of character, his intelligence [*ʿaql*] will be sound and correct, his work will be firmly based, his discernment [*ḥilm*] will increase, and he will be included among the saints [*awliyāʾ*] and chosen friends [*aṣfiyāʾ*] of Allāh, among those who see because of Allāh, speak because of Allāh, receive because of Him, and give because of Him. At the same time, he must always be suspicious of his own lower self [*nafs*], suspicious of his passionate desire [*hawā*], in personal matters and with regard to his religion [*dīn*], and suspicious of Iblīs. Then, in addition to all of that, he must be suspicious of his self-knowledge, as it relates to his direct experience [*maʿrifa*] of his own lower self [*nafs*].



**Concerning the ten good habits [*khiṣāl*] that must be cultivated by those who engage in the spiritual struggle and the examination of conscience [*ahl al-mujāhada wa 'l-muḥāsaba*], and by those who possess a strong commitment to their sense of duty [*ulu 'l-ʿazm*].<sup>27</sup>**

**F**or those who engage in the spiritual struggle [*mujāhada*] and the examination of conscience [*muḥāsaba*], and who possess a strong commitment to their sense of duty [*ulu 'l-ʿazm*], there are ten good habits [*khiṣāl*] which they must train themselves to adopt. Once they have put them into practice, and mastered them, with the permission of Allāh (Exalted is He), they will attain to the noble spiritual stations.

1. The servant must not swear by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), whether truthfully or falsely, deliberately or absentmindedly. If he exercises this kind of self-control and trains his tongue accordingly, that will lead him to break the habit of swearing altogether, with or without premeditation.

Then, once his new habit is firmly established, Allāh will open unto him a doorway, through which His radiant lights will stream. The servant will recognize the benefit of this in his heart. He will also experience an increase in his physical well-being, a promotion in his rank, and a strengthening of his determination and perception. He will earn the commendation of his spiritual brothers [*ikhwān*], and the respect of his neighbors, so that all who know him will regard him as a good example, and everyone who sees him will hold him in awe.

2. He must refrain from telling lies, whether in jest or in earnest. If he practices this self-control and his tongue gets used to being restrained,

<sup>27</sup> It is interesting to note that this subsection is almost identical in content with the Seventy-eighth Discourse of *Revelations of the Unseen [Futūḥ al-Ghaib]*. (See pp. 183–87 of the Al-Baz edition.)

Allāh (Exalted is He) will thereupon expand his feelings and purify his mind. He will reach the point where lying strikes him as intolerable. If he hears it from someone else, he will reproach and rebuke him for it within himself. If he prays for the person to be rid of it, he will thereby earn a spiritual reward.

3. He must beware of promising something to someone, and then failing to keep his promise, when he is capable of fulfilling it, unless he has an obviously valid excuse. He would do better to stop making promises altogether. This accords more strongly with his main concern, and is more appropriate to his path [*tarīq*], since breach of promise is tantamount to lying. If he acts on this advice, the door of generous favor will be opened unto him, and he will attain to the degree of humble modesty [*ḥayāʾ*]. He will be granted loving affection in the company of the truthful [*ṣādiqīn*], and higher esteem in the sight of Allāh (Exalted be His praise).

4. He must refrain from cursing anything in the whole of creation, or hurting anything from a mere atom upward. This is one of the moral standards of the righteous [*abrār*] and the truthful [*ṣādiqīn*]. It yields a good result for one who observes it, in that he enjoys Allāh's protection in this world, along with the spiritual degrees He has in store for him, and He delivers him from the pitfalls of perdition, keeps him safe from his fellow creatures, blesses him with human compassion, and brings him near to Himself (Almighty and Glorious is He).

5. He must refrain from invoking evil on any of his fellow creatures, even one who has done him wrong. He must not cut him with his tongue, nor act in ways designed to pay him back. He must respond with tolerant forbearance, for the sake of Allāh (Blessed and Exalted is He), and not retaliate against him in word or deed, for these good habits [*khiṣāl*] will promote their practitioner to the high degrees. If he cultivates them, he will thereby attain to noble status, in this world and the hereafter. He will gain love and affection in the hearts of all his fellow creatures, near and far. He will receive a positive response to his supplication [*daʿwa*], exaltation in goodness, and the greatest respect in this world, in the hearts of all true believers [*mu'minīn*].

6. He must not assert that he has evidence of polytheistic association [*shirk*], unbelief [*kufr*] or hypocrisy [*nifāq*] on the part of any member of the Muslim community ["people of the *Qibla*"]. Such

restraint is closer to merciful compassion [*rahma*] and higher in spiritual degree. It is perfectly in keeping with the Sunna [the exemplary practice of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace)]. It is farthest from presumptuous intrusion upon the knowledge [*ilm*] of Allāh (Glory be to Him, and Exalted is He), farthest from the displeasure of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and closest to the good pleasure and merciful compassion of Allāh (Exalted is He). It is therefore an honorable and noble gateway to Allāh. May He endow His servant with compassion for all His creatures!

7. He must refrain from directing his attention and interest toward any form of sinful disobedience, both outwardly and inwardly, and he must restrain all his limbs and organs from participating in them. Such efforts bring the quickest reward to heart and body in the present life of this world, as well as the good things Allāh holds in store in the hereafter. We beg Allāh (Exalted is He) to favor us all with the ability to put these good habits into practice, and to expel our base desires from our hearts!

8. He must refrain from inflicting any burden or inconvenience, be it small or great, on any of his fellow creatures. He must rather relieve all his fellow creatures of any inconvenience he might cause them, regardless of what he needs or can do without, since this is the height of honor for worshipful servants [*‘ābidīn*], and of nobility for the truly devout [*muttaqīn*]. From this he gains strength to fulfill his duty to enjoin what is right and fair [*al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf*], and forbid what is wrong and unfair [*an-nahy ‘ani'l-munkar*].<sup>28</sup> All his fellow creatures should be of one status in his sight, endowed with the right [*ḥaqq*] to equal justice.

If he conducts himself accordingly, Allāh (Exalted is He) will transport him to the realm of transcendence [*fanā’*], certitude, and confidence in Him (Almighty and Glorious is He). He does not promote anyone because of his desire, and all human beings are entitled to equal justice in His sight. This is quite certainly the cause of honor for the believers and of nobility for the righteous, and it is the nearest doorway to sincere devotion [*ikhlās*].

<sup>28</sup> For an extensive account of the duty to enjoin that which is right and fair [*al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf*], and forbid that which is wrong and unfair [*an-nahy ‘ani'l-munkar*], see Vol. 1, pp. 151–70.

9. He must stop expecting human beings to satisfy his greed, and not let himself covet what they have at their disposal. Thus he will achieve the greatest honor, peculiar enrichment, vast dominion, splendid glory, pure certitude, and frank, unequivocal trust [*tawakkul*] in the Lord. This is one of the doors to confidence in Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). It is also one of the doors to abstinence [*zuhd*]. It is the means by which he can attain to pious caution [*wara'*], and perfect his performance of religious duties [*nusuk*]. It is one of the distinctive features of those who are wholly dedicated to Allāh (Blessed and Exalted is He).

10. The tenth good habit [*khaṣla*] is modest humility [*tawāḍu'*], because that is the means by which he can construct the splendor of his degree, exalt his station, perfect his dignity and elevation, in the sight of Allāh (Exalted is He) and in the eyes of his fellow creatures, and accomplish what he wishes to achieve, in this world and the hereafter. This good habit [*khaṣla*] is the root, branch and consummation of all acts of worshipful obedience [*tā'āt*]. It is the means by which the servant [of the Lord] can attain to the stations of the righteous [*ṣāliḥīn*], of those who are well pleased [*rāḍīn*] with Allāh (Exalted is He), in hardship and prosperity alike. This is the perfection of piety [*taqwā*]. Modest humility [*tawāḍu'*] means that the servant never meets any of his fellow human beings, without seeing that person as having some merit superior to his own. He will always say: "Perhaps he is better than I, in the sight of Allāh, and higher in degree." If he meets someone junior to himself, he will say: "This person has not sinned against Allāh, whereas I have sinfully disobeyed Him." If he meets someone senior, he will say: "This person has served Allāh before me." If he meets a learned scholar [*ālim*], he will say: "This person has been endowed with something I have not achieved, and he has attained to something I have not acquired. He has learned something of which I am ignorant, and he puts knowledge into practice." If he meets an ignorant individual, he will say: "This person has sinned against Allāh in ignorance, whereas I have sinned against Him in full knowledge. I do not know what the final verdict on him will be, nor what it will be in my own case." If he meets an unbeliever [*kāfir*], he will say: "I do not know. Maybe this person will accept Islām, and receive the stamp of approval for his good conduct. Maybe I shall turn to unbelief, and be condemned for my bad behavior."

This is the gate of tender loving care [*shafaqa*] and fearful apprehension [*wajal*], and it is both the first and the final challenge presented to the servants [of the Lord]. If the servant conducts himself in the manner we have described, Allāh will keep him safe from the perils and dangers. He will thereby attain to the stations of those who give sincere advice [*naṣīḥa*] for the sake of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). He will come to be included among the chosen friends [*aṣfiyā'*] and loved ones [*aḥbāb*] of the All-Merciful [*ar-Raḥmān*]. He will be numbered among the enemies of Iblīs,<sup>29</sup> the enemy of Allāh (may Allāh curse him).

It is also the gate of merciful compassion [*rahma*]. In order to reach it, the servant must have cut the road of arrogant pride, and the cords of vain conceit. He must have abandoned the degree of loftiness, and avoided the degree of self-glorification, in the sphere of religion [*dīm*], in worldly matters, and with respect to the hereafter. It is the marrow of worshipful service [*mukhkh al-'ibāda*], the ultimate honor of the pious abstainers [*zāhidīm*], and the emblem of the reclusive devotees [*nāsikīm*]. In other words, there is nothing superior to it.

The servant must now prevent his tongue from discussing human beings and matters of no importance, otherwise he will accomplish nothing. In all his conditions and circumstances, he must rid his heart of every trace of malice, rebelliousness, and arrogant pride. In private and in public, his tongue must be one and the same. In private and in public, his desire must be one and the same, as must his manner of speaking. When it comes to giving sincere advice [*naṣīḥa*], all his fellow creatures must be one in his sight. He must not be someone who gives advice, yet speaks ill of one of Allāh's creatures, or acts offensively toward him, or loves to listen to evil rumors, or takes delight in hearing wicked talk, for this spells the ruin of the worshipful [*'ābidīm*], the destruction of the reclusive devotees [*nāsikīm*], and the perdition of the pious abstainers [*zāhidīm*—apart from anyone whom Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) assists, through His mercy, to safeguard his tongue and his heart.

<sup>29</sup> Iblīs is the personal name of the Devil. Some Western scholars consider it to be an arabicized version of the Greek diabolos, but the Arab philologists derive it from the root *b-l-s*, on the grounds that Iblīs "has nothing to expect [*ubliṣa*] from the mercy of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He)." He is also called *ash-Shaiṭān* [Satan, the Devil], *'aduww* Allāh [the enemy of God] or simply *al-'aduww* [the Enemy]. Unlike the English word Satan, however, *ash-Shaiṭān* is not strictly speaking a proper name, as A.J. Wensinck points out in his article IBLĪS in the *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*. (See also: T.P. Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam*, art. DEVIL).

**Concerning some of the most important virtues,  
namely:**

1. Absolute trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*].
2. Goodness of moral character [*ḥusn al-khulq*].
3. Thankfulness [*shukr*].
4. Patience [*ṣabr*].
5. Contentment [*riḍā*].
6. Truthfulness [*ṣidq*].





## 1. Concerning absolute trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*].

As for putting all one's trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*], the basic guidance on the subject is contained in His words (Almighty and Glorious is He):

And when someone puts all his trust in Allāh, He will be enough for him. (65:3) *wa man yatawakkal 'ala 'llāhi fa-Huwa ḥasbu-h.*

—and in His words (Exalted is He):

And put all your trust [in Allāh], if you are indeed believers. (5:23) *wa 'ala 'llāhi fa-tawakkalū in kuntum mu'minīn.*

According to a traditional report, transmitted on the authority of 'Abdu'llāh ibn Mas'ūd<sup>30</sup> (may Allāh be well pleased with him), Allāh's Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

I saw the religious communities [*umam*] at the gathering place [*mawsim*], and I noticed that my Community [*Ummatī*] filled both the plain and the mountainside, so I was astonished at their number and their condition. I was asked: "Are you well pleased?" "Yes," said I. Then I was told: "Together with these, seventy thousand will enter the Garden of Paradise without undergoing any reckoning. They do not play with fire. They do not look for bad omens. They do not practice subterfuge. They put all their trust in their Lord."

On hearing this, 'Ukāsha ibn Miḥṣan al-Asadī stood up and said: "O Messenger of Allāh, appeal to Allāh that He may include me among them!" So Allāh's Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) said: "O Allāh, let him be included among them!" Then someone else jumped up and said: "Appeal to Allāh that He may include me among them!" To this he responded (Allāh bless him and give him peace) by saying: "'Ukāsha has arrived there ahead of you!"

<sup>30</sup> Abū 'Abd ar-Raḥmān 'Abdu'llāh ibn Mas'ūd al-Hudhalī (may Allāh be well pleased with him). One of the earliest and closest Companions of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace). A man of lowly antecedents, he became an authority on the recitation and interpretation of the Qur'ān, as well as an expert on Islamic law and the Prophetic tradition. He died in A.H. 32 or 33.

The real meaning [*ḥaqīqa*] of absolute trust [*tawakkul*] is delegating all one's affairs to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), making a clean escape from the murky darkness and gloom of personal choice and self-management, and advancing to the arenas where the [divine] decrees [*aḥkām*] and foreordainment [*taqdīr*] are experienced directly.

The servant [of the Lord] must be convinced that there is no possibility of changing the allotment of destiny [*qisma*], which means that whatever has been allotted to him cannot pass him by, and that he can never obtain what has not been allotted to him. His heart will then become reconciled to this, and he will feel confident in relying on the promise [*wa'd*]<sup>31</sup> of his Master [*Mawlā*]. He will therefore receive from his Master [*Mawlā*].

Putting one's trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*] is actually the first of three stages, namely: (1) the basic sense of trust [*tawakkul*], then (2) the act of surrender or resignation [*taslīm*], and then (3) the act of delegation [*tafwīd*]. The person who is at the stage of basic trust [*al-mutawakkil*] is one who feels confident in relying on the promise [*wa'd*] of his Lord. The person who is at the stage of surrender or resignation [*ṣāhib at-taslīm*] is one who is content to rely on His knowledge [*'ilm*]. The person who is at the stage of delegation [*ṣāhib at-tafwīd*] is one who is happy to accept His judgment [*ḥukm*].

There are many wise sayings on this subject, for instance:

“Trust is an initial stage [*at-tawakkul bidāya*], surrender or resignation is a middle stage [*at-taslīm wasat*], and delegation is a final stage [*at-tafwīd nihāya*].”

“Trust is the attribute of the believers [*at-tawakkul ṣifat al-mu'minīn*], surrender or resignation is the attribute of the saints [*at-taslīm ṣifat al-awliyā'*], and delegation is the attribute of those who realize and affirm the Divine Oneness [*at-tafwīd ṣifat al-muwahhidīn*].”

“Trust is the attribute of the common folk [*at-tawakkul ṣifat al-'awāmm*], surrender or resignation is the attribute of the élite [*at-taslīm ṣifat al-khawāṣṣ*], and delegation is the attribute of the élite of the élite [*at-tafwīd ṣifat khawāṣṣ al-khawāṣṣ*].”

“Trust is the attribute of the Prophets [*at-tawakkul ṣifat al-Anbiyā'*], surrender or resignation is the attribute of Abraham [*at-taslīm ṣifat*

<sup>31</sup> That is to say, the promise of blissful reward in the Hereafter. Allāh (Exalted is He) has emphasized the truthfulness of His promise [*wa'd*] in Q. 31:33, and of His threat [*wa'id*] in Q. 50:12–14.

*Ibrāhīm*], and delegation is the attribute of our own Prophet [Muḥammad] [*at-tafwīd ṣifat Nabīyyi-nā*] (may the blessings of Allāh be upon them all).”

The point of this last saying is that trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*], as a complete and perfect reality [*ḥaqīqa*], was experienced by Abraham, the Bosom Friend of Allāh [*Ibrāhīm al-Khalīl*] (peace be upon him), at the moment when he said to Gabriel [*Jibrīl*] (peace be upon him): “As for recognizing your existence, oh no!” This was because his personal identity [*nafs*] had vanished without leaving a trace behind, so that he saw nothing together with Allāh (Exalted is He), other than Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

It was Sahl ibn ‘Abdi’llāh<sup>32</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) who said:

“The first stage in absolute trust [*tawakkul*] is where the position of the servant between the hands of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is just like that of the corpse between the hands of the ritual washer of the dead [*ghāsil*],<sup>33</sup> who turns the body this way and that, as he wishes, while it has no independent movement or control of its actions. Someone who puts all his trust [*al-mutawakkil*] in Allāh (Glory be to Him and Exalted is He) is therefore in a state where he does not ask for anything, does not wish for anything, does not reject anything, and does not hold on to anything.”

In the words of another wise saying:

“Trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*] is letting oneself go [*istirsāl*].”

It was Ḥamdūn [al-Qaṣṣār]<sup>34</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) who said:

“It is holding fast [*i’ tiṣām*] to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).”<sup>35</sup>

Ibrāhīm al-Khawwās<sup>36</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy

<sup>32</sup> Abū Muḥammad Sahl ibn ‘Abdi’llāh ibn Yūnus at-Tustarī was a Sunnī theologian and mystic, born at Tustar (al-Aḥwāz) in A.H. 203/818 C.E. and died in exile at Baṣra in A.H. 283/896 C.E.

<sup>33</sup> In an earlier chapter of the present work, Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has provided a detailed account of the rules and customary practices connected with the ritual washing [*ghusl*] of the dead. (See Vol. 4, pp. 289–301.)

<sup>34</sup> Ḥamdūn al-Qaṣṣār an-Nisābūrī, who died in A.H. 271/884 C.E., was one of the three founding fathers of the Malāmātī movement. The other two were Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Amr ibn Salma al-Ḥaddād (d. A.H. 270/883 C.E.) and Abū ‘Uthmān Sa‘īd ibn Ismā‘īl al-Ḥairī [al-Ḥīrī], known as al-Wā‘iz [the Preacher] (d. A.H. 298/910 C.E.). May Allāh bestow His mercy upon them.

<sup>35</sup> This is an allusion to Q. 3:101.

<sup>36</sup> Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Aḥmad al-Khawwās of Samarra (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him), a contemporary of al-Junaid and an-Nūrī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon them), was known as the Chief of the Trustful [*Sayyid al-Mutawakkilīn*]. He is renowned for his marvelous experiences during his long journeys in the desert. He died at Rayy in A.H. 291/904 C.E.

upon him) had this to say on the subject:

“The real meaning [*ḥaqīqa*] of absolute trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*] is the detachment of fear and hope from everything apart from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).”

In the words of another wise saying:

“Absolute trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*] is living one day at a time, and dispensing with concern about tomorrow.”

It was Abū ‘Alī ar-Rūdhbārī (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) who said:

“There are three stages in the development of absolute trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*], namely: (1) when he is granted a gift, the recipient is grateful, and when he is deprived, he is patient; (2) as far the servant [of the Lord] is concerned, to be deprived and to be granted a gift are one and the same; (3) deprivation combined with gratitude is what he likes best of all, because he is aware that this is Allāh’s preference (Exalted is He) on his behalf.

Ja‘far al-Khuldī is reported as having said: “Ibrāhīm al-Khawwāṣ (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) once said:

“As I was traveling along the road to Mecca, I caught sight of a wild-looking figure, so I said to it: “Are you a jinnī or a human being?” It replied: “I am a jinnī, of course,” so I asked: “Where are you going?” The following conversation then took place between us:

““I am on my way to Mecca,” said the jinnī.

““What,” said I, “with no provision for the journey, and without a camel to ride on?”

““Yes,” said the jinnī, “among our kind as well, there are those who travel on the basis of absolute trust in the Lord [*‘ala ’t-tawakkul*].”

““And what,” I asked, “is absolute trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*]?”

““It is receiving from Allāh,” the jinnī told me.”

Sahl [ibn ‘Abdīllāh ibn Yūnus at-Tustarī]<sup>37</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) once said:

“It is the conscious acknowledgment [*ma‘rifa*] of the Provider of the sustenance of all creatures [*Mu‘ī arzāqi ’l-makhlūqīn*]. No one is genuinely capable of absolute trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*], until the sky in his sight is like brass, and the earth is like iron, so that rain does not fall from the sky, and plants do not sprout from the earth, yet between

<sup>37</sup> See note 32 on p. 116 above.

these two, he is well aware that Allāh will never forget to provide him with the sustenance He has guaranteed to him.”

In the words of another wise saying:

“It means that you do not disobey Allāh (Exalted is He) on account of your sustenance.”

As a certain wise man put it:

“In order to have absolute trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*], it is sufficient that you seek for yourself no helper other than Allāh (Exalted is He), for your sustenance no keeper other than Him, and for your conduct no witness other than Him.”

It was al-Junaid<sup>38</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) who said:

“Absolute trust [*tawakkul*] means that you devote yourself totally to your Lord, and that you turn your attention away from all those who are beneath Him.”

In the words of an-Nūrī<sup>39</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him):

“It means that you let your self-management become absorbed into His management [*tadbīr*], and that you are perfectly satisfied with Allāh as a Trustee [*Wakīl*], as a Manager [*Mudabbīr*] and as a Helper [*Naṣīr*].”<sup>40</sup>

Allāh Himself (Exalted is He) has told us:

And Allāh is sufficient as a Trustee. *wa kafā bi'llāhi Wakīlā.*  
(4:81)

In the words of another wise saying:

“Absolute trust [*tawakkul*] is the state in which the humble servant [*al-'abd adh-dhātīl*] is utterly content with the All-Majestic Lord [*ar-Rabb al-Jalīl*], just as the Bosom Friend [*al-Khatīl*] was utterly content with the

<sup>38</sup> Abu 'l-Qāsim al-Junaid ibn Muḥammad al-Khazzāz al-Qawārīrī an-Nihāwandī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) was the son of a glass-merchant. He was a nephew of Sarī as-Saqāṭī, and became a close associate of al-Muḥāsibī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon them). Renowned for the clarity of his perception and the firmness of his self-control, he earned a reputation as the principal exponent of the “sober” school of Islāmic mysticism. His *Rasā'il* [Epistles] consist of letters to private individuals, and short tractates on mystical themes, some cast in the form of commentaries on Qur'ānic texts. He died in A.H. 298/910 C.E.

<sup>39</sup> Abu 'l-Ḥusain Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad an-Nūrī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) was a native of Baghdād, although his family came from Khurāsān. He was a pupil of Sarī as-Saqāṭī and a faithful companion of al-Junaid (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon them). A leading figure in the Baghdād circle, he composed some fine mystical poetry. He died in A.H. 295/908 C.E.

<sup>40</sup> This is an allusion to the verse [*āya*] of the Qur'ān:

And Allāh is sufficient as a Helper. (4:45) *wa kafā bi'llāhi Naṣīrā.*

All-Majestic [*al-Jalīl*], so much so that he took no notice of the attentive presence of Gabriel [*Jibrīl*] (peace be upon him).”

To quote yet another wise saying:

“It means abstaining from self-motivated activity, in complete reliance on the Creator [*Khāliq*] of the earth and the heavens.”

Bahlūl the Crazy One [*al-Majnūn*]<sup>41</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) was once asked: “When does the servant [of the Lord] become someone who is absolutely trustful [*mutawakkil*]?” To this he replied: “When he, as a person [*bi'n-nafs*], is a stranger among his fellow creatures, and when, in his inner feeling [*bi'l-qalb*], he is close to the Truth [*al-Ḥaqq*].”

Someone asked Ḥātim al-Aṣamm [“the Deaf”]<sup>42</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him): “On what basis have you developed this special condition of yours, this absolute trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*]?” To this he replied: “On four particular elements, namely: (1) I came to realize that my sustenance will not be consumed by anyone other than myself, so I should not be concerned about it; (2) I came to realize that my work will not be done by anyone other than myself, so I must be busy about it; (3) I came to realize that death may come suddenly and unexpectedly, so I must waste no time in order to forestall it; (4) I came to realize that I am in the sight of Allāh (Exalted is He) in every condition and circumstance, so I must behave with due modesty under His gaze.”

<sup>41</sup> Bahlūl al-Majnūn [literally, the Crazy One, but more appropriately “the Wise Fool”] (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) is believed by some to have been the brother of Hārūn ar-Rashīd, the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph who figures so prominently in the stories of *The Thousand and One Nights* [*Alf laila wa laila*]. In the words of Sheikh Muzaffer Ozak al-Jerrahi:

The saint known as Bahlūl the Wise Fool was a conscious spiritual guide.... This noble person used to disguise his store of wisdom behind a pretense of craziness, just as clever people hide their buried treasure among ruins.... He came and went undisturbed in the palace of Hārūn [ar-Rashīd], who would ask him all kinds of questions, seeking his guidance on affairs of state, while he protected the Caliph’s afterlife. (*Irshād*, pp. 324–25.)

<sup>42</sup> Abū ‘Abd ar-Rahmān Ḥātim ibn ‘Unwān al-Aṣamm [“the Deaf”] (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) was a native of Balkh, and a pupil of Shaqīq al-Balkhī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him). He visited Baghdād, and died at Washjard near Tirmidh in A.H. 237/852 C.E. His hearing was actually quite unimpaired, but a woman once broke wind while she was asking him a question, so, to spare her embarrassment, he said to her: “Speak louder. I am hard of hearing.” Ḥātim then continued to feign deafness for almost fifteen years, as long as the old woman was still alive. (See: A.J. Arberry, *Muslim Saints and Mystics*. London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966; pp. 150–52.)

Abū Mūsā ad-Dabīlī (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) is reported as having said:

“I asked ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Yaḥyā about absolute trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*], so he told me: ‘[It means that] even if you were to stick your hand into the mouth of the great sea monster [*tinnīn*],<sup>43</sup> as far as the wrist, you would fear nothing other than Allāh.”

Abū Mūsā (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) went on to say:

“I then set out to visit Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī<sup>44</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him), in order to ask him about absolute trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*]. When I knocked on his door, he said to me: ‘O Abū Mūsā, what did you find unsatisfactory in the answer you received from ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān, that you should come and ask me the same question?’ So I said: ‘O my master, open the door!’ But he said: ‘If you were coming to see me as a regular visitor, I would open the door for you. Take your answer from the door!’ So I turned away and left [with the answer, which was: ‘Absolute trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*] means that] even if the serpent that is coiled around the Heavenly Throne [*‘Arsh*] were to take an interest in you, you would fear nothing other than Allāh.”

Abū Mūsā (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) then continued:

“So I kept traveling until I came to [the city of] Dabīl,<sup>45</sup> where I took

<sup>43</sup> According to the classical Arabic lexicographers, the word *tinnīn* is generally understood to mean: “an aquatic animal, great in make, terrible in appearance, long and broad in the body, large in the head, having very glistening eyes, wide mouth and inside, and many teeth. It swallows many animals, and the animals of the land and of the sea are afraid of it. When it moves the sea becomes agitated with waves by reason of its great strength. In its first state, it is a malignant serpent, that eats what it sees of the beasts of the land. When its mischief becomes great, Allāh sends an angel that carries it away, and throws it to Gog [*Yājūj*] and Magog [*Mājūj*].

“It is related of one that was seen to fall, that it was found to be about two leagues in length, of a color like that of the leopard, with scales like those of a fish, two great fins in form like those of a fish, a head like a great hill, resembling the head of a man, two long and great ears, and two round eyes. From its neck dangled forth six other necks, every one of them nearly twenty cubits long, and every one of them having a head like that of a serpent.”

In the context of astronomy, the term *tinnīn* is applied to the northern constellation of the Dragon. (See: E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. T–N–N.)

<sup>44</sup> Abū Yazīd Ṭaifūr ibn ‘Īsā ibn Sorushān al-Biṣṭāmī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him), whose grandfather Sorushān was a Zoroastrian, was born in the district of Biṣṭām in northeastern Persia, and it was there that he died in A.H. 261 or 264/874 or 877 C.E. His mausoleum still stands as a place of pious visitation. He is famous for the boldness of his utterances, and is regarded as the founder of the ecstatic or “drunken” school of Islāmic mysticism, as opposed to the “sober” school founded by al-Junaid (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him).

<sup>45</sup> Dabīl is the Arabic name for the Armenian city of Dwin. In a work completed in A.H. 375/985 C.E., the geographer al-Maqdisī reports the existence of an active Ṣūfī community in that city. (See: J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*. Oxford University Press, 1971; p. 6.)

up residence for one whole year. Then I decided it was time to pay a visit, so I set out on the road to Abū Yazīd [al-Biṣṭāmī]. When I reached him, he said to me: ‘Now you have come to see me as a regular visitor. Welcome to the visitor! Do come in!’ So I stayed as his guest for a month, during which nothing ever occurred to me without his telling me all about it, before I had time to ask him. Then I said to him: ‘O Abū Yazīd, I now propose to take my leave, so I request you to provide me with a useful lesson.’ To this he replied: ‘The useful lesson provided by creatures is not a useful lesson!’ So I understood this to be a useful lesson, and took my leave.”

According to a report from Ibn Ṭāwūs al-Yamānī (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him), his father, Ṭāwūs (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him), told him:

“An Arab nomad [A‘rābī] once came [to Mecca] on a riding camel of his. He caused the beast to kneel down, and hobbled its feet with a cord. Then he raised his head toward the sky, and said: ‘O Allāh, this riding camel, as well as the load upon its back, is covered by Your insurance, until I return to reclaim it.’ He then went off and entered the Sacred Mosque [*al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*].

“Some time later, the Arab nomad returned from the Sacred Mosque [*al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*—to find that the riding camel had been taken away, together with the load on its back. So he raised his head toward the sky, and said: ‘O Allāh, nothing has been stolen from me, for nothing is ever stolen except from You.’”

Ṭāwūs went on to say:

“While we were in this situation together with the Arab nomad, we suddenly caught sight of a man descending from the peak of Mount Abū Qubais.<sup>46</sup> He was leading the riding camel with his left hand, while his right hand, which had been cut off, was attached to a cord around his neck. When he eventually reached the Arab nomad, he said: ‘Here, take your riding camel, along with the load on its back.’

“I asked the man about his condition, so he explained: ‘On the peak of Abū Qubais, I was approached by a rider on a gray horse. “O thief,” he said to me, “hold out your hand!” So I held it out, and he placed it on a slab of rock. Then he took another piece of rock and used it to

<sup>46</sup> Abū Qubais [“Father of the Small Ember”] is the name of the black basaltic mountain skirting Mecca to the East.



amputate my hand, which he then tied to my neck. “Now go back down the mountain,” he told me, “and return the riding camel, along with the load it carries, to the Arab nomad.””

[The Caliph] ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allāh be well pleased with him) is reported as having said: “Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

“If you really and truly placed all your trust in Allāh [*law tawakkaltum ‘ala ‘llāhi haqqa tawakkuli-hi*], He would sustain you as He sustains the birds. They start the day with their bellies empty, and end it with their bellies full.”

According to a traditional report, transmitted by Muḥammad ibn Ka‘b on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās<sup>47</sup> (may Allāh be well pleased with him and with his father), Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) also said:

If it would please someone to be the noblest of men, let him devote himself truly to Allāh. And if it would please someone to be the richest of men, let him be more reliant on what is at the disposal of Allāh, and less reliant on what is at his own disposal.

‘Umar [ibn al-Khaṭṭāb] (may Allāh be well pleased with him) used to quote these two verses [of Arabic poetry] as an instructive example:

Go easy on yourself, for the outcome of all affairs is determined by God’s decree.	<i>hawwin ‘alai-ka fa-inna ‘l-umūra bi-amri ‘l-llāhi maqādīru-hā.</i>
If something is meant to go elsewhere, it will never come your way, but if it is yours by destiny, from you it cannot flee.	<i>fa-lāisa bi-āti-ka maṣrūfu-hā wa lā hāribin ‘an-ka maqādīru-hā.</i>

Someone asked Yaḥyā ibn Mu‘ādh [ar-Rāzī]<sup>48</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him): “When does a man become someone who is absolutely trustful [*mutawakkil*]?” To this he replied: “When he is perfectly satisfied with Allāh as a Trustee [*Wakil*].”<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> ‘Abdu’llāh ibn ‘Abbās (may Allāh be well pleased with him and with his father) was a cousin of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace). He became a scholar of great renown, especially for exegesis [*tafsīr*] of the Qur’ān. He died in A.H. 68.

<sup>48</sup> Abū Zakariyā’ Yaḥyā ibn Mu‘ādh ar-Rāzī (may Allāh bestow his mercy upon him) was a disciple of Ibn Karrām. After leaving his native town of Rayy, he lived for a time in Balkh, then moved to Nīshāpūr where he died in A.H. 258/871 C.E. He is credited with the authorship of a certain number of poems.

<sup>49</sup> This is an allusion to the verse [*āya*] of the Qur’ān:

And Allāh is sufficient as a Trustee. (4:81) *wa kafā bi’llāhi Wakīlā.*

It was Bishr [al-Ḥāfi]<sup>50</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) who said:

“One of them may say: ‘I have put all my trust in Allāh [*tawakkaltu ‘ala ‘llāh*],’ although he is actually telling a lie. For, by Allāh, if he had really put all his trust in Allāh, he would be perfectly content with the way Allāh treats him.”

Abū Turāb an-Nakhshabī (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) once said:

“Absolute trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*] means casting the physical body into servitude [*‘ubūdiyya*], attaching the inner feeling to the Divine Lordship [*Rubūbiyya*], and having serene confidence in sufficiency [*kifāya*], so that one responds to receiving by giving thanks, and to deprivation by being patient.”

It was Dhu ‘n-Nūn al-Miṣrī [the Egyptian]<sup>51</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) who said:

“Absolute trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*] means giving up self-management, and divesting oneself of any personal claim to power and strength.”

Dhu ‘n-Nūn (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) also said, to a man who asked him about absolute trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*]:

“It means detaching oneself from worldly lords [*arbāb*], and severing all attachment to material means [*asbāb*].”

The questioner went on to say: “Tell me more,” so he added:

“[It means] throwing the lower self [*nafs*] into servitude [*‘ubūdiyya*], and removing it from the position of lordship [*rubūbiyya*].”

<sup>50</sup> Abū Naṣr Bishr ibn al-Ḥārith al-Ḥāfi [“the Barefoot”] (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) was born near Merv ca. A.H. 150/767 C.E. Converted from a life of wanton dissipation, he settled in Baghdād, where he became a serious student of the traditions of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), but he then abandoned formal learning for the life of a wandering beggar. Destitute, starving and barefoot, he acquired the nickname al-Ḥāfi, but he nevertheless won both the admiration of Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) and the respect of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Ma‘mun. He died in Baghdād in A.H. 227/841 C.E.

<sup>51</sup> Dhu ‘n-Nūn Abu ‘l-Faiḍ (or Fayyāḍ) Thawbān ibn Ibrāhīm al-Miṣrī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) was born at Ikhmīm in Upper Egypt, ca. A.H. 180/796 C.E., the son of a Nubian father. His life is shrouded in obscurity, in spite of the many legends related about him in detailed biographies by later authors. It can be stated with a fair degree of certainty, however, that he lived in Cairo, and that he traveled extensively. We also know that he was arrested—like Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him)—for upholding the traditional Islāmic doctrine that the Qur‘ān is uncreated, in opposition to the Mu‘tazilite thesis that was espoused by some of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs. He was transported to Baghdād, released after a term of imprisonment, and returned to die at Gīza near Cairo in A.H. 245/859 C.E.

He also said: “It means the cessation of ambitious designs [*maṭāmi‘*].”

As for the enterprising activity that is undertaken with the outer being [*al-ḥaraka bi’-ḥ-ḥāhir*]<sup>52</sup>—which is a way of describing material acquisition [*kasb*] conducted in accordance with the Sunna<sup>52</sup>—this is not incompatible with the absolute trust experienced by the inner feeling [*tawakkul al-qalb*], after the servant [of the Lord] has come to realize, within his inner feeling, that the power to decide is the prerogative of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). [There is no incompatibility between the two] because the location of absolute trust [*tawakkul*] is the inner feeling, and because it constitutes the actualization of faith [*taḥqīq al-īmān*]. To reject the validity of material acquisition [*kasb*] would be tantamount to rejecting the validity of the Sunna, and to reject the validity of absolute trust [*tawakkul*] would be tantamount to rejecting the validity of faith [*īmān*].

If some difficulty is encountered in relation to the material means [*asbāb*], it is due to the decree of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and if something is found to be easy in that regard, it is due to His facilitation (Almighty and Glorious is He). The limbs and organs of the physical body, and all the external faculties [*ḥawāhir*], must therefore be actively involved in the instrumental process [*mutaḥarrika bi’-s-sabab*], in compliance with the commandment of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), while the inner being [*bāṭin*] remains calmly reliant on the promise of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).<sup>53</sup>

Anas ibn Mālik<sup>54</sup> (may Allāh be well pleased with him) is reported as having said:

“A man once rode into town on a fine she-camel of his, and he said: ‘O Messenger of Allāh, shall I just leave her unattended, and put my trust in the Lord [*ada‘u-hā wa atawakkalu*]?’ So the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) told him: ‘Hobble her feet with a rope, and put your trust in the Lord [*a‘qil-hā wa tawakkal*]!’”

<sup>52</sup> In other words, this statement refers to material acquisition [*kasb*] conducted in accordance with the customary procedures established by the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace).

<sup>53</sup> See note 31 on p. 115 above.

<sup>54</sup> Abū Ḥamza Anas ibn Mālik (may Allāh be well pleased with him) is one of the most prolific narrators of Prophetic tradition. His mother presented him as a servant to the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), in whose service he remained until his master died. Anas himself lived on to a very advanced age (according to various accounts, he was somewhere between 97 and 107 years old when he died, around A.H. 91–93).

In the words of one wise saying:

“He who puts all his trust in the Lord is like a baby. Just as the infant is not aware of having anything else to turn to, except its mother’s breast, the completely trustful person [*al-mutawakkil*] feels himself guided in no other direction, except toward his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).”

In the words of another wise saying:

“Absolute trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*] means the banishment of doubts, and the delegation [*tafwīd*] of one’s concerns to the King of kings [*Mālik al-mulūk*].”

In the words of yet another wise saying:

“Absolute trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*] means relying with confidence on what is at the disposal of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and expecting nothing at all from what is at the disposal of human beings.”

This saying also deserves to be quoted:

“Absolute trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*] means emptying the innermost being [*sirr*] of any consideration one might give to the idea of resorting to litigation [*taqāḍī*] in the quest for sustenance.”



## 2. Concerning goodness of moral character [*ḥusn al-khulq*].

As for goodness of moral character [*ḥusn al-khulq*], the basic guidance on the subject is contained in the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), addressed to His Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) in His Book, which was sent down and revealed to him:

And you are indeed  
of a splendid character. (68:4)                      *wa inna-ka  
la-‘alā khuluqin ‘azīm.*<sup>55</sup>

There is also the traditional report, transmitted on the authority of Anas ibn Mālīk<sup>56</sup> (may Allāh be well pleased with him), who said:

“Someone asked: ‘O Messenger of Allāh, which of the believers [*mu`minīn*] is the most excellent in faith [*īmān*]?’ To this he replied (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

“The best of them in moral character [*aḥsanu-hum khulqan*].”

Good moral character [*al-khulq al-ḥasan*] is the most excellent of all the virtues of the servant [of the Lord], and through it the essential natures [*jawāhir*] of men are made manifest. The human being is privately disguised by his physical constitution [*khalq*], and publicly revealed by his moral character [*khulq*].

To quote a wise saying on the subject:

“Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has distinguished His Prophet and His Messenger, Muḥammad, (Allāh bless him and give him peace), by endowing him with certain miracles [*mu`jizāt*], charismatic exploits [*karāmāt*],<sup>57</sup> and exceptional virtues [*faḍā’il*]. Yet He has not praised him for any of his special qualities, to the same extent as He has praised

<sup>55</sup> The forms [*khuluq*] and [*khulq*] are completely synonymous, both meaning “[moral] character, temper, nature; innate peculiarity; natural disposition.” While the form *khuluq* occurs in this verse [*āya*] of the Qur’ān, the shorter form *khulq* is probably more commonly used.

<sup>56</sup> See note 54 on p. 124 above.

him for his moral character [*khulq*], for He has said (More Glorious is He than any other sayers):

And you are indeed  
of a splendid character. (68:4)      *wa inna-ka  
la-‘alā khuluqin ‘aẓīm.*”

Several explanations have been offered, including the following:

“When Allāh (Exalted is He) extolled him on account of his moral character [*khulq*], He did so because he behaved with noble generosity in both [the material and the spiritual] realms of being [*al-kawnain*], and because he was completely satisfied with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).”

“The character described as splendid [*al-khuluq al-‘aẓīm*] is that of someone who does not become involved in litigation, whether as plaintiff or defendant, because of his intense awareness [*ma‘rifā*] of Allāh (Exalted is He).”

“What it signifies is that he [who has a splendid character] is not affected by the rudeness of creatures [*khalq*], once he has become acquainted with the Truth [*Ḥaqq*].”

In the words of Abū Sa‘īd al-Kharrāz<sup>58</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him):

“It refers to the character of someone who has no aspiration [*himma*] other than Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).”

<sup>57</sup>The term *mu‘jiza* (plural: *mu‘jizāt*) is applied to a miracle performed by a Prophet [*Nabī*], and is distinguished from the *karāma* performed by a saint [*walī*] or righteous person [*ṣāliḥ*]. As defined by the Islāmic theologians, a *mu‘jiza* is “an event at variance with the usual course of nature, produced by one who lays claim to the office of a Prophet, in contending with those who refuse to acknowledge his claim, in such a manner as renders them unable to produce the like thereof.” (See: E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. ‘-J-Z.) In a lengthy discussion of the miracles [*mu‘jizāt*] attributed to the Prophets (blessings and peace be upon them all), Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has told us:

It is also universally believed by the people of Islām that the Prophet Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace) was granted as many miracles [*mu‘jizāt*] as those bestowed upon the rest of the Prophets, and more besides. Some of the experts in religious knowledge [*aḥl al-‘ilm*] have counted no fewer than a thousand such miracles. Included among them is the Qur‘ān....

(See Vol. 1, pp. 250–53.)

<sup>58</sup>Abū Sa‘īd Aḥmad ibn ‘Īsā al-Kharrāz al-Baghdādī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) was a cobbler by trade. He met Dhu ‘n Nūn al-Miṣrī, and became a companion of Bishr al-Ḥāfi and Sarī as-Saqāfi (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon them). The author of several books, some of which have survived to this day, he is credited with having formulated the mystical doctrine of *fanā’* [becoming extinct to the realm of creation] and *baqā’* [existing in perpetuity in the presence of Allāh]. While the date of his death is uncertain, it probably occurred between A.H. 279/892 C.E. and A.H. 286/899 C.E. (See: A.J. Arberry, *Muslim Saints and Mystics*. London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966; pp. 218–20.)

It was al-Junaid <sup>59</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) who said: “I once heard al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī<sup>60</sup> say:

“We have lost three things: (1) good looks combined with chastity, (2) good speech combined with honesty, and (3) good brotherliness combined with loyalty.”

In the words of one wise saying:

“Good moral character [*al-khulq al-ḥasan*] means attaching little importance to that which is withheld from you, and attaching great importance to that which is granted to you.”

To quote another wise saying:

“The mark of goodness of moral character [*ḥusn al-khulq*] is the prevention of serious harm and the toleration of nuisances.”

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said to his Companions (may Allāh be well pleased with them all):

You will never succeed in comforting people with your worldly possessions, so comfort them with cheerfulness of face and goodness of moral character [*ḥusn al-khulq*].



<sup>59</sup> See note 38 on p. 118 above.

<sup>60</sup> Abū ‘Abdi’llāh al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Baṣrī al-Muḥāsibī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) is generally regarded as one of the most outstanding figures in the history of Islāmic mysticism. Born in Baṣra in A.H. 165/781 C.E., he was still at an early age when he moved to Baghdād, where he studied the traditions of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), became an expert in Islāmic theology [*kalām*], and was closely involved with the leading personalities and prominent events of his times. He died in A.H. 243/857 C.E., but his teachings and writings continued to exert a profound and far-reaching influence, notably on the famous Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (the author of *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm ad-Dīn*). Many of al-Muḥāsibī’s books and pamphlets have been preserved to this day.

## 2a.

### Concerning goodness of moral character [*ḥusn al-khulq*] in relation to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

In relation to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), goodness of moral character [*ḥusn al-khulq*] means that you carry out His commandments and respectfully observe His prohibitions. It means that you obey Him in all conditions and circumstances, without believing that you are entitled to receive compensation from Him. It means that you surrender all that is decreed by destiny [*maqḍūr*] to Him, without suspicious reservation. It means that you affirm His Oneness, without attributing partners [*shirk*] to Him. It means that you accept the truth of His promise [*waʿd*],<sup>61</sup> without any doubt.

Somebody once asked Dhu 'n-Nūn al-Miṣrī<sup>62</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him): “Of all people, who has the most to worry about?” He replied: “The one who has the worst moral character [*aswa' u-hum khulqan*].”

It was al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī<sup>63</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) who said, in commenting on the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

And your garments purify! (74:4)      *wa thiyāba-ka fa-ṭahhir*

—“That is to say: ‘Your moral character improve! [*khuluqa-ka fa-ḥassin*].”

Someone said, in commenting on the words of Allāh (Exalted is He):

And He has lavished  
His favors upon you,  
both outwardly and inwardly.      *wa asbagha  
‘alai-kum ni‘ama-hu  
zāhiratan wa bāṭina.*  
(31:20)

<sup>61</sup> See note 31 on p. 115 above.

<sup>62</sup> See note 51 on p. 123 above.

<sup>63</sup> Al-Ḥasan ibn Abi'l-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) is revered as one of the greatest saints of early Islām. Born in Medina in A.H. 21/642 C.E., he was brought up in Baṣra, where he met many Companions of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace.) He died in A.H. 110/728 C.E.



—“The favor conferred outwardly is the orderly arrangement of the physical constitution [*khalq*], while the favor conferred inwardly is the purification of the moral character [*khulq*].”

Someone asked Ibrāhīm ibn Ad’ham<sup>64</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him): “Have you ever felt really happy in this world?” “Yes,” he replied, “on two occasions. On the first occasion, as I was sitting at ease one day, a dog came along and urinated on me. On the second occasion, again while I was sitting at ease, a person came along and slapped me on the back of the neck.”

It is said of Uwais al-Qarānī<sup>65</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) that, whenever he caught sight of young boys throwing stones at him, he would say to them: “If you have nothing better to do, at least choose only little stones to throw at me, so that you will not make my leg bleed, and prevent me from performing the ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*]!”

It is said that a man kept heaping insults on Aḥnaf ibn Qais (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him), tagging along behind him as he did so. Finally, when he reached the outskirts of the village, Aḥnaf stopped in his tracks. “Young man,” he said, “if you have anything else to get off your chest, you had better say it now, in case some of the local village idiots happen to hear you, and respond to you in kind!”

Someone asked Ḥātīm al-Aṣamm [“the Deaf”]:<sup>66</sup> “Should a man maintain an attitude of tolerance toward every individual?” “Yes,” he replied, “except toward himself.”

According to a traditional report, the Commander of the Believers [*Amīr al-Mu’minīn*], ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may Allāh be well pleased with him), once summoned a bondsman [*ghulām*], but the young attendant failed to respond to his call. So he summoned him a second time, and a third, but still he did not respond. He then went to look for him, and

<sup>64</sup> Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Ad’ham ibn Maṣūr ibn Yazīd ibn Jābir at-Tamīmī al-‘Ijlī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) was born in Balkh of pure Arab descent. His life has often been compared to that of Buddha, since he is described in legend as the Prince of Balkh who renounced his kingdom and wandered westward to live a life of complete asceticism, earning his bread in Syria by honest manual labor until his death in ca. A.H. 165/782 C.E. According to some accounts, he was killed in the course of a naval expedition against Byzantium.

<sup>65</sup> See note 10 on p. 31 above.

<sup>66</sup> See note 42 on p. 119 above.

found him lying asleep. “Young man,” he said, “can you not hear?” “Yes, I can hear,” came the reply, so he asked him: “What induced you to refrain from answering my call?” “I felt safe from your punishment,” he explained, “so I decided to be lazy.” On hearing this, ‘Alī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) told him: “Away you go, for you now are a free man [*ḥurr*] for the sake of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).”

The following sayings also deserve to be quoted:

“Good moral character [*al-khulq al-ḥasan*] means that you are close to people, and a stranger to anything that keeps them apart from one another.”

“Good moral character [*al-khulq al-ḥasan*] means putting up with whatever you are made to suffer, because of the rudeness of your fellow creatures [*lajāfā’ al-khalq*] and the verdict of the Truth [*qaḍā’ al-Ḥaqq*], without resentment or dismay.”

“It is written in the Gospel [*al-Injīl*]: ‘My servant, remember Me when you are angry, for then I shall remember you when I am angry.’”

A woman once said to Mālik ibn Dīnār<sup>67</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him): “O ostentatious hypocrite [*yā murā’ī!*]” So he said to her: “O lady, you have discovered my proper name, which the people of Baṣra had somehow mislaid!”

Luqmān<sup>68</sup> said to his son: “O my dear son, you must not acknowledge three [people for what they seem to be], except in three [situations], namely: (1) the tolerant person [*ḥalīm*] in a situation calculated to provoke anger; (2) the brave hero [*shujā’*] in a situation of active combat; and (3) the good brother [*akh*] in a situation where he is really needed.”

Moses [*Mūsā*] (peace be upon him) said: “O my God [*yā Ilāhī*], I beseech You, let it not be said of me that I have what I do not have within me!” So Allāh (Exalted is He) conveyed to him by way of inspiration [*awḥā ilai-hi*]: “I have not done that to Myself, so how could I do it to you?”

<sup>67</sup> Abū Yaḥyā Mālik ibn Dīnār as-Sāmī an-Nājī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) was the son of a Persian slave from Sijistān (or Kābul) and became a disciple of al-Ḥasan al-Bāsrī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him). He is often mentioned as a reliable narrator of traditions of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), which he transmitted from such early authorities as Anas ibn Mālik and Ibn Sīrīn. A noted early calligrapher of the Qur’ān, he died ca. A.H. 130/748 C.E.

<sup>68</sup> Luqmān is commonly known as Luqmān the Wise [*Luqmān al-Ḥakīm*], because Allāh (Exalted is He) has told us in the Qur’ān:

And We did indeed give Luqmān wisdom.  
(31:12)

*wa la-qaḍ ātainā Luqmāna ‘l-ḥikmata*

### 3. Concerning thankfulness [*shukr*].

As for thankfulness [*shukr*], the basic guidance on the subject is contained in the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

If you are thankful,	<i>la-in shakartum</i>
I will surely give you more;	<i>la-aẓidanna-kum</i>
but if you are ungrateful,	<i>wa la-in kafartum</i>
My punishment is terrible indeed.	<i>inna ‘adhābī la-shadīd.</i>
(14:7)	

This is reinforced by the traditional report, transmitted on the authority of ‘Aṭā’ (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him), who said:

“I entered the presence of [the Prophet’s widow] ‘Ā’isha (may Allāh be well pleased with her), and said: ‘Tell us about the most amazing experience you ever had in the company of Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace).’ She wept at first, but then she said: ‘Was there anything at all about him that was not a marvelous wonder? He came to me one night, and snuggled up beside me in my bed [*firāshī*]<sup>69</sup> until his skin was touching my skin. But then he said: ‘O daughter of Abū Bakr, let me go, so that I may devote myself to the worship of my Lord.’

“She said: ‘So I told him: “I love your nearness, but I prefer to respect your dearest wish.” I therefore allowed him (Allāh bless him and give him peace) to take his leave of me. So he got up, found a skin container full of water, and performed his ritual ablution [*tawaḍḍa’ a*], pouring a considerable amount of water in the process. Then he stood erect, and started to perform the ritual prayer [*qāma fa-ṣallā*]. He wept as he did so, until his tears were streaming down onto his chest. Then he adopted the bowing posture [*raka’a*], and shed more tears. Then he prostrated himself [*sajada*], and again he wept. Then he raised his head, and wept still more. He went on like this (Allāh bless him and give him peace)

<sup>69</sup> At this point in the text, the reporter interjects: “or she may have said ‘*lihāfi* [my bedspread].”

until Bilāl<sup>70</sup> (may Allāh be well pleased with him) arrived on the scene, and so he told him about the ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*].

“I then said: “O Messenger of Allāh, what causes you to weep, when Allāh has forgiven you your earlier and later sins?” To this he replied (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

““Should I not be a thankful servant [*‘abd shakūr*]? Why should I not do it, since Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has sent down to me the words of revelation:

Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, and the ship that runs upon the sea with that which is of use to human beings, and the water which Allāh sends down from the sky, thereby reviving the earth after its death, and dispersing all kinds of beasts therein, and the distribution of the winds, and the clouds set in orderly array between heaven and earth—surely there are signs for people who can understand. (2:164)”

*inna fi khalqī 's-samāwāti  
wa 'l-arḍi wa 'khtilāfi 'l-laili  
wa 'n-nahāri  
wa 'l-fulki 'llatī tajrī  
fi 'l-bahri bi-mā yanfa'u 'n-nāsa  
wa mā anzala 'llāhu  
mina 's-samā'i min mā'in  
fa-aḥyā bi-hi 'l-arḍa  
ba'da mawti-hā wa baththa  
fi-hā min  
kulli dābba:  
wa taṣrīfi 'r-riyāḥi  
wa 's-saḥābi 'l-musakhhkharī  
baina 's-samā'i wa 'l-arḍi  
la āyātīn li-qawmin  
ya'qilūn.*

According to those who specialize in ascertaining the actual facts [*ahl at-taḥqīq*], the true nature of thankfulness [*ḥaqīqat ash-shukr*] is the acknowledgment of the benefaction of the benefactor [*ni'mat al-mun'im*], with an attitude of humility. In accordance with this meaning, Allāh (Exalted is He) has described Himself as being the Most Thankful One [*ash-Shakūr*] in the widest sense, that is to say, in the sense that He rewards His servants for their thankfulness. For the recompense of thankfulness [*jazā' ash-shukr*] is also called thankfulness [*shukr*], just as Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

And the recompense of an evil  
is an evil just like it. (42:40)

*wa jazā'u sayyi'atin  
sayyi'atun mithlu-hā.*

It has also been said that the true nature of thankfulness [*ḥaqīqat ash-shukr*] is the act of praising the beneficent person [*muḥsin*] by

<sup>70</sup> Bilāl al-Ḥabashī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) was the first muezzin [*mu'adhḥin*] appointed by the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) to summon the Muslim community to the five daily prayers. He was an Abyssinian slave who had been ransomed by Abū Bakr (may Allāh be well pleased with him).

mentioning his beneficence [*iḥsān*]. The servant's thankfulness [*shukr*] to Allāh (Exalted is He) is therefore expressed through the praise he offers to Him, by mentioning His beneficence [*iḥsān*] toward His servant. As for the thankfulness [*shukr*] of the Lord of Truth (Glory be to Him) toward His servant, it is expressed through the praise He confers upon him, by making it known that he has acted beneficently for His sake. Furthermore, the beneficence [*iḥsān*] of the servant represents his worshipful obedience to Allāh, while the beneficence [*iḥsān*] of the Lord of Truth (Glory be to Him) represents His bestowal of gracious favor [*in'ām*] upon His servant. When the thankfulness [*shukr*] of the servant is genuine, it is not only a matter of utterance by the tongue, but also the heart's acknowledgment of the Lord's bestowal of gracious favor [*in'ām ar-Rabb*].

Moreover, thankfulness [*shukr*] can be subdivided into several categories, namely:

1. Thankfulness expressed by the tongue [*shukr bi'l-lisān*]. This constitutes the acknowledgment of the benefaction [*ni'ma*] with an attitude of humble acceptance [*istikāna*].

2. Thankfulness expressed by the body and the limbs [*shukr bi'l-badan wa 'l-arkān*]. This is the characteristic indication of loyalty and readiness to serve [*al-wafā' wa 'l-khidma*].

3. Thankfulness expressed by the inner feeling [*shukr bi'l-qalb*]. This requires a careful balance between the visible display of appreciation and the constant preservation of a sense of reverence.

It has also been said that thankfulness of the eyes [*shukr al-'ainain*] means that you overlook any fault you notice in your companion, while thankfulness of the ears [*shukr al-udhunain*] means that you ignore any fault you hear him accused of possessing.

In the simplest terms, thankfulness [*shukr*] means that you do not disobey Allāh (Exalted is He) by misusing His gracious favors.

Here is another saying that clearly deserves to be quoted:

“Thankfulness [*shukr*] may mean the thankfulness of the learned scholars [*shukr al-'ālimīn*], in which case it will be among the subjects they discuss.

“Thankfulness [*shukr*] may mean the thankfulness of the dedicated worshippers [*shukr al-'ābidīn*], in which case it will be a feature of their actions.

“Thankfulness [*shukr*] may mean the thankfulness of those who know by direct intuition [*shukr al-‘arīfīn*], in which case it will be expressed through their honest devotion to Him (Almighty and Glorious is He) in all their states and conditions. It will be expressed through their firm conviction that whatever is good in their experience, and whatever is manifested from them in the way of worshipful obedience, servitude, and remembrance of Him (Almighty and Glorious is He), is entirely due to His enabling guidance [*tawfīq*], His gracious favor, His help, His power and His strength (Almighty and Glorious is He). It will be expressed through their detachment from all of that, and their total absorption [*fanā’*] in Him. It will be expressed through their acknowledgment of their own inability, deficiency and ignorance, and then through their humble submission to Him (Almighty and Glorious is He) in all conditions and circumstances.”

It was Abū Bakr al-Warrāq (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) who said:

“Thankfulness for a gracious favor [*shukr an-ni‘ma*] means feasting one’s eyes on the gift received, while preserving a sense of reverence.”

As someone else once put it:

“Thankfulness for a gracious favor [*shukr an-ni‘ma*] means that you regard yourself as no more deserving of it than a parasite [*tufailī*].”

It was Abū ‘Uthmān [al-Ḥīrī]<sup>71</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) who said:

“Thankfulness [*shukr*] is the conscious awareness [*ma‘rifa*] of the fact that you are quite incapable of thankfulness.”

Let us also consider the following wise sayings:

“Thankfulness for thankfulness [*ash-shukr ‘ala ’sh-shukr*] is more complete than simple thankfulness [*shukr*]. This means that you regard your thankfulness as the result of His enablement [*tawfīq*], and you have received that enablement on account of the gracious favors bestowed upon you, so you give thanks to Him for the thankfulness He has

<sup>71</sup> Abū ‘Uthmān Sa‘īd ibn Ismā‘īl al-Ḥīrī [or, al-Ḥairī], known as al-Wā‘iz [the Preacher] (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him), was one of the early Shaikhs of Khurāsān. Along with Ḥamdūn al-Qaṣṣār an-Nisābūrī and Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Amr ibn Salma al-Ḥaddād an-Nisābūrī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon them), he came to be regarded as one of the three founding fathers of the Malāmātī movement. He visited al-Junaid (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) in Baghdād, and died at Nishapūr in A.H. 298/911 C.E. “Even in the days of my childhood,” he once said, “my heart was always seeking after something of reality. I was always convinced...that the Islāmic way of life held mysteries other than its external manifestations.”

enabled you to experience. Then you thank Him for the thankfulness-upon-thankfulness [*shukr ash-shukr*], and so on ad infinitum.”

“Thankfulness [*shukr*] is the attribution of blessings to their Master [*Mawlā*], with an attitude of humble submission to Him.”

It was al-Junaid<sup>72</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) who said:

“Thankfulness [*shukr*] means that you do not look upon yourself as worthy of the gracious favor you have received.”

In several wise sayings, the meaning of the simple adjective *shākīr* [thankful; grateful] is contrasted with the significance of the intensive form *shakūr* [very thankful; most grateful; extremely appreciative]. For instance:

“The person who is simply thankful [*shākīr*] is someone who gives thanks for what is available [*mawjūd*], while the person who is very thankful [*shakūr*] is someone who gives thanks for what is unavailable [*mafqūd*].”

“The person who is simply thankful [*shākīr*] is someone who gives thanks for the provision of benefit [*naḥ*’], while the person who is very thankful [*shakūr*] is someone who gives thanks for the withholding of benefit [*man*’].”

“The person who is simply thankful [*shākīr*] is someone who gives thanks for the granting of gifts [*ʿaṭā*’], while the person who is very thankful [*shakūr*] is someone who gives thanks for trial and tribulation [*balā*’].”

“The person who is simply thankful [*shākīr*] is someone who gives thanks in response to immediate delivery [*badhl*], while the person who is very thankful [*shakūr*] is someone who gives thanks when delivery is subject to deferment [*maṭl*].”

It was [Abū Bakr ibn Jaḥdar] ash-Shiblī<sup>73</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) who said:

“Thankfulness [*shukr*] means focusing attention on the source of the benefit [*mun*’im], not focusing attention on the benefit [*ni*’ma] itself.”

<sup>72</sup> See note 38 on p. 118 above.

<sup>73</sup> Abū Bakr ibn Jaḥdar ash-Shiblī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) was of Khurāsānian origin, although born in Baghdād or Samarra. The son of a court official, he rose through the ranks of the imperial service. While in Baghdād for the occasion of his investiture as Governor of Demavend, he experienced conversion. He joined the circle of al-Junaid (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him), played a leading part in the stormy history of al-Ḥallāj (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him), and was committed to an asylum on account of his eccentric behavior. He died in A.H. 334/946 C.E. at the age of 87. (See: A.J. Arberry, *Muslim Saints and Mystics*. London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966; pp. 277-86.)

Someone else had this to say on the subject:

“Thankfulness [*shukr*] means firmly securing the bonds of that which has been found [*qaid al-mawjūd*], and then hunting for that which is still missing [*ṣaid al-mafqūd*].”

It was Abū ‘Uthmān [al-Ḥīrī]<sup>74</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) who said:

“The thankfulness of the common folk [*shukr al-‘amma*] is for food and drink and clothing, while the thankfulness of the élite [*shukr al-khawāṣṣ*] is for the spiritual values [*ma‘ānī*] conferred upon their hearts.”

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has told us:

And few of My servants are very thankful. (34:13)	<i>wa qalīlun min ‘ibādiya ‘sh-shakūr.</i>
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[The Prophet] David (peace be upon him) once said:

“My God [*Ilāhī*], how can I thank You, when my thankfulness to You [*shukrī la-ka*] is itself a blessing from among Your gracious favors [*nī‘ ma min nī‘ami-ka*]?”

So Allāh (Blessed and Exalted is He) conveyed to him by way of inspiration [*awḥā ilai-h*]: “Now you have thanked Me indeed! [*al-āna qad shakarta-nī*].”

To quote another wise saying:

“If your hand is too short to extend remuneration, let your tongue dwell at length on the expression of thanks [*shukr*].”

When Idrīs (peace be upon him) was given the good tidings of forgiveness, he is said to have asked for life. “Why?” he was asked, so he explained: “So that I may be able to thank Him, for I was previously working for forgiveness.” The angel thereupon spread its wing, and carried him up to heaven.

It is said that one of the Prophets [*Anbiyā’*] (peace be upon them all) once passed by a small stone, from which a large amount of water was gushing forth. He was astonished at the sight, but Allāh caused the stone to let him know that it could speak, so he asked it about its condition. It told him: “Ever since I heard Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) speak of:

a Fire of which the fuel is men and stones. (66:6)	<i>nāran waqūdu-ha ‘n-nāsu wa ‘l-ḥijāratu.</i>
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<sup>74</sup> See note 73 on p. 135 above.



—I have been weeping from fear of it.” So that Prophet (peace be upon him) offered a prayer of supplication, pleading with Him to grant that stone asylum from the Fire. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) thereupon conveyed to him by way of inspiration [*awḥā ilai-h*]: “I have already granted it asylum from the Fire.” That Prophet then continued on his way. When he returned later on, he found that the water was still gushing from the stone, but even more copiously than on his previous visit. He was bewildered, but Allāh (Exalted is He) again caused the stone to let him know that it could speak, so he said to it: “Why are you still weeping, when Allāh has already forgiven you?” The stone explained: “That was the weeping of sorrow and fear, but this is the weeping of thankfulness [*shukr*] and joy.”

In the words of another wise saying:

“One who is thankful [*shākīr*] is in the presence of superabundance [*mazīd*], because he is going through the experience of receiving gracious favor [*ni‘ma*], for Allāh (Exalted is He) has told us:

If you are thankful,	<i>la-in shakartum</i>
I will surely give you more. (14:7)	<i>la-aẓīdanna-kum</i>

“And one who is patient [*ṣābir*] is in the presence of Allāh, taking shelter with Him (Exalted is He), because he is going through the experience of suffering trial and tribulation [*balā’*]. Allāh (Exalted is He) has told us:

Surely Allāh is with	<i>inna ‘llāha</i>
those who are patient. (2:153)”	<i>ma‘a ‘ṣ-ṣābirīn</i>

“Praise [*ḥamd*],” it has been said, “is for the very breaths we breathe, while thankfulness [*shukr*] is for the blessings of the senses.”

In the words of the authentic tradition [*al-khabar aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*]:

The first of those invited to enter the Garden of Paradise will be those who are constantly praising Allāh [*al-ḥammādūna li‘llāh*].

“Praise [*ḥamd*],” it has also been said, “is for what He has prevented, while thankfulness [*shukr*] is for what He has brought into being.”

The following story was told by one of the righteous:

“In the course of one of my journeys, I caught sight of an old man, who was far advanced in age, so I asked him about his condition. He responded by telling me: ‘In the early part of my life, I was deeply in love

with a cousin of mine, the daughter of my paternal uncle, and she was equally in love with me, so it was agreed that I should marry her. [When she entered my chamber] on the night of her bridal procession [*zifāf*], I said to her: ‘Come, let us spend the whole of this night in worship, as a way of giving thanks to Allāh [*shukran li’ llāh*] (Almighty and Glorious is He) for having brought us together.’ So we performed the ritual prayer [*ṣallainā*] throughout that night, and neither of us paid any attention to the other. Then, when the second night came around, we spent the whole of it in similar fashion. This came to be our constant practice, so that now, after seventy or eighty years have gone by, we are still in that same state every night.’ His wife was with him at the time, so he turned to her and asked her: ‘Is that not just the way it is, O so-and-so?’ To this the old woman replied: ‘It is just as the old man told you.’”



#### 4. Concerning patience [*ṣabr*].

As for patience [*ṣabr*], the basic guidance on the subject is contained in the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

O you who believe, endure with patience, outdo all others in patient endurance, be ready, and observe your duty to Allāh, in order that you may succeed. (3:200)	<i>yā ayyuha 'lladhīna āmanu 'ṣbirū wa ṣābirū wa rābiṭū: wa 'ttaqu 'llāha la' alla-kum tuflīhūn.</i>
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—and in His words (Almighty and Glorious is He):

And endure patiently [O Muḥammad]. Your endurance is only by [the help of] Allāh. (16:127)	<i>wa 'ṣbir wa mā ṣabru-ka illā bi' llāhi.</i>
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—as well as in the following traditional reports:

According to 'Ā'isha (may Allāh be well pleased with her), the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

Patience ought to be exercised at the first shock [*inna aṣ-ṣabra 'inda 'ṣ-ṣadmati'l-ūlā*].<sup>75</sup>

It is reported that a man once said: “O Messenger of Allāh, my property has gone and my body has become sick.” So the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) told him:

There is no good in a servant [of the Lord] whose property does not depart, and whose body does not get sick. Whenever Allāh (Exalted is He) loves a servant of His, He is sure to put him to the test, and when He puts him to the test, He admonishes him to be patient.

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is also reported as having said:

In the progress of a man's development in the sight of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), there is a stage that he cannot reach by means of his own work.

<sup>75</sup> In commenting on the use of the word *ṣadma* [shock; assault, attack], as it occurs in this saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), the classical Arabic lexicographers observe that “patience is usually the last thing to be exercised in a case of misfortune, but it is most commended on the occasion of the sharpness or vehemence thereof.” (See: E.W.Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. Ṣ–D–M.)

He must first suffer the pain of affliction in his physical body, for that is the only means by which he can reach it.

According to one traditional account [*khabar*], when the words of Allāh (Blessed and Exalted is He):

And he who does something wrong will have the recompense thereof. (4:123)	<i>wa man ya'mil sū'an yujza bi-hi.</i>
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—were sent down, Abū Bakr, the Champion of Truth [*aṣ-Ṣiddīq*] (may Allāh be well pleased with him), said: “O Messenger of Allāh, how can there be any hope of salvation [*falāh*], now that this Qur’ānic verse [*āya*] has been revealed?” So the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) told him:

Allāh has forgiven you, O Abū Bakr. Do you not get sick? Does painful affliction not befall you? Do you not endure with patience? Do you not experience grief and sorrow? Well, these are the things for which you will be recompensed.

That is to say: “Every affliction that befalls you will be an atonement [*kaffāra*] for your sins.”

There are actually three kinds of patience [*ṣabr*], namely:

1. Patience for the sake of Allāh [*ṣabr li'llāh*] (Almighty and Glorious is He). This is the kind of patience [*ṣabr*] that is exercised in the course of carrying out His commandments and respectfully observing His prohibitions.

2. Patience in bearing with Allāh [*ṣabr ma'a'llāh*] (Almighty and Glorious is He). This is the kind of patience [*ṣabr*] that is exercised while undergoing the effects of His decree and His actions within you, which cause you to experience all kinds of hardships and adversities.

3. Patience in anticipation of Allāh [*ṣabr 'ala'llāh*] (Almighty and Glorious is He). This is the kind of patience [*ṣabr*] that is exercised while waiting for that which He has promised, in the way of sustenance, joyful relief, sufficiency, triumphant success, and reward in the abode of the Hereafter.

It has also been said that patience [*ṣabr*] can be divided into two types, namely:

1. Patience [*ṣabr*] exercised in situations where there is an active rôle [*kasb*] for the servant [of the Lord] to play.

2. Patience [*ṣabr*] exercised in situations where he has no active rôle [*kasb*] to play.

In the case of patience [*ṣabr*] exercised in situations where he does have an active rôle [*kasb*] to play, there is a further twofold subdivision, namely:

1a. [Patience exercised] in performing that which Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has commanded him to do.

1b. [Patience exercised] in avoiding that which Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has forbidden him to do.

As for patience [*ṣabr*] exercised in situations where there is no active rôle [*kasb*] for the servant [of the Lord] to play, this refers to his patient endurance of the suffering he must undergo on account of the judgment of Allāh and His decree, in the form of trouble and pain experienced in both the inner feeling and the physical body.

It has been said that those who are called patient [*ṣābirūn*] are actually of three types, namely: (1) someone who tries to be patient [*mutaṣabbir*]; (2) someone who is simply patient [*ṣābir*]; and (3) someone who is very patient indeed [*ṣabūr*].

A man once came to see what he could learn from ash-Shiblī<sup>76</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him), so he said to him:

“What kind of patience [*ṣabr*] is hardest on those who are patient [*ṣābirīn*]?”

“Patience in relation to Allāh [*aṣ-ṣabr fi ’llāh*].”

“No.”

“Patience for the sake of Allāh [*aṣ-ṣabr li’ llāh*].”

“No.”

“Patience in bearing with Allāh [*aṣ-ṣabr ma’ a ’llāh*].”

“No.”

“Well then, what is it?”

“Patience in enduring separation from Allāh [*aṣ-ṣabr ‘ani ’llāh*].” At this point, ash-Shiblī gave vent to such a plaintive cry that his spirit was almost destroyed.

It was al-Junaid<sup>77</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) who said:

“The journey from this world to the Hereafter is a trivial distance of six cubits for the believer [*mu’min*] to travel. The exodus from the realm of creation [*khalq*] in the direction of the Lord of Truth [*Ḥaqq*] is difficult to accomplish. The journey from the self [*nafs*] toward Allāh is

<sup>76</sup> See note 73 on p. 136 above.

<sup>77</sup> See note 38 on p. 118 above.

extremely hard. But patience with Allāh [*aṣ-ṣabr ma‘a ‘llāh*] is even more difficult.”

Someone asked him (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) to explain the meaning of patience [*ṣabr*], so he said: “It is the swallowing of a bitter draught without displaying a frown or a scowl.”

‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may Allāh be well pleased with him) once said: “Patience [*ṣabr*] in relation to faith [*īmān*] is in the position of the head in relation to the body.”<sup>78</sup>

It was Dhu ‘n-Nūn al-Miṣrī<sup>79</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) who said:

“Patience [*ṣabr*] means refraining from acts of noncompliance, remaining calm when swallowing the lumps that form in the throat as a reaction to misfortune, and demonstrating spiritual affluence despite the advent of poverty in the sphere of material livelihood.”

The following sayings also deserve to be quoted:

“Patience [*ṣabr*] means coping with misfortune by remaining on your best behavior.”

“It means being wiped out by misfortune [*balwā*] without showing any sign of complaint [*shakwā*].”

“Patience [*ṣabr*] means keeping a healthy attitude in the presence of adversity, no less than in the presence of well-being.”

“The most excellent recompense for worshipful service [*‘ibāda*] is the recompense for patience [*ṣabr*]. Allāh (Exalted is He) has told us:

And We shall surely pay those  
who were patient their wage,  
according to the best  
of what they did. (16:96)

*wa la-najziyanna ‘lladhīna  
ṣabarū ajra-hum  
bi-aḥsani  
ma kānū ya‘malūn.*

—and He has also told us (Almighty and Glorious is He):

Surely the patient  
will be paid their wages  
in full without reckoning.  
(39:10) ”

*innamā yuwaffa ‘ṣ-  
ṣābirūna ajra-hum  
bi-ghairi ḥisāb.*

“Patience [*ṣabr*] means remaining steadfast in loyal obedience to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and accepting the agonies of His affliction with a broad and expansive feeling.”

<sup>78</sup> **Author’s note:** According to some authorities, this saying has been attributed to the Prophet himself (Allāh bless him and give him peace).

<sup>79</sup> See note 51 on p. 123 above.

It was al-Khawwās<sup>80</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) who said:

“Patience [*ṣabr*] means remaining steadfast in loyal obedience to Allāh (Exalted is He), in accordance with the statutes [*aḥkām*] of the Book and the Sunna.”

Yaḥyā ibn Mu‘ādh ar-Rāzī<sup>81</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) once said:

“The patience of the lovers [of the Lord] [*ṣabr al-muḥibbīn*] is much harder than the patience of the ascetics [*ṣabr az-ẓāhidīn*]. How astonishing it is, that they can be patient at all!”

He then waxed poetic, as he declared [in Arabic verse]:

“Patience is bearable in all other contexts,  
but with You it is unbearable.”

Let us also consider the following sayings:

“Patience [*ṣabr*] means giving up complaining”.

“It means humble submission [*istikāna*] and seeking refuge [*isti‘ādha*] with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).”

“It means seeking help [*isti‘āna*] from Allāh.”

“The basic noun *ṣabr* [patience] means that no distinction is made between the state of grace [*ni‘ma*] and the ordeal of tribulation [*miḥna*], and that both are experienced with equanimity [*sukūn al-khāṭir*]. The derived form *taṣabbur* [trying to be patient] means calmness in coping with misfortune, although the feelings are affected by the burdens of the ordeal.”



<sup>80</sup> See note 36 on p. 116 above.

<sup>81</sup> See note 48 on p. 122 above.

## 5. Concerning contentment [*riḍā*].

As for contentment [*riḍā*], the fundamental guidance on the subject is contained in the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

Allāh is well pleased with them, and they are well pleased with Him. (58:22)	<i>raḍiya 'llāhu 'an-hum wa raḍū 'an-h.</i>
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—and in His words (Blessed and Exalted is He):

Their Lord gives them good tidings of mercy from Him, and good pleasure, and Gardens [of Paradise] in which they shall have lasting bliss. (9:21)	<i>yubashshiru-hum Rabbu-hum bi-rahmatin min-hu wa riḍwānin wa jannātin la-hum fī-hā na'imun muqīm.</i>
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Furthermore, according to a traditional report, transmitted on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās<sup>82</sup> (may Allāh be well pleased with him and with his father), Allāh's Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

The full flavor of true faith [*īmān*] is tasted by one who is content with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) as a Lord [*Rabb*].

[The Caliph] 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb once wrote to Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī<sup>83</sup> (may Allāh be well pleased with them both):

“The point I wish to emphasize is this: All goodness resides in contentment [*riḍā*], so if you are capable of being content, [well and good]. If not, you must be patient [*fa-'sbir*].”

It was Qatāda<sup>84</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him)

<sup>82</sup> See note 47 on p. 122 above.

<sup>83</sup> Abū Mūsā 'Abdu'llāh ibn Qais ibn Sulaimān al-Ash'arī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) was a loyal Companion of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace). He served as a general in many of the battles fought in the early days of Islām. In A.H. 37, he was appointed as an arbitrator to represent 'Alī (may Allāh ennoble his countenance) at the Battle of Ṣiffīn. He was also a distinguished scholar in the field of Qur'ānic studies. He died ca. A.H. 42.

<sup>84</sup> Abu'l-Khaṭṭāb Qatāda ibn Di'āma ibn Qatāda as-Sadūsī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) was learned in Qur'ānic exegesis [*tafsīr*] and Islamic jurisprudence [*fiqh*], as well as being an authority on Arabic poetry. He died in A.H. 118.



who said, in commenting on the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

And if one of them receives tidings of the birth of a female, his face remains darkened, and he is inwardly furious. (16:58)	<i>wa idhā bushshira aḥadu-hum bi'l-unthā zalla wajhu-hu muswaddan wa huwa kaẓīm.</i>
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—“This describes the attitude of those Arabs who attribute partners to Allāh [*mushrikī* 'l-*Arab*]. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has thus informed us of the badness of their attitude. As for the believer [*mu'mīn*], he is worthily disposed to be content with whatever Allāh (Exalted is He) has allotted to him.”

The judgment of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is better than a man's judgment on his own behalf. That which Allāh has decreed for you concerning something you dislike, O son of Adam, may be even better for you than that which Allāh has decreed for you concerning something you like. You must therefore observe your duty to Allāh (Exalted is He), and be content to accept His decision.

Allāh (Blessed and Exalted is He) has told us:

But it may happen that you hate a thing that is good for you, and it may happen that you love a thing which is bad for you. Allāh knows, and you know not. (2:216)	<i>wa 'asā an takrahū shai'ān wa huwa khayrun la-kum: wa 'asā an tu'ibbū shai'an wa huwa sharrun la-kum: wa 'llāhu ya'lamu wa antum lā ta'lamūn.</i>
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That is to say, [He knows, and you do not know] what is in the best interest of your religion [*dīn*] and your worldly life, for Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has kept concealed from His creatures the things that are to their advantage. He has charged them with servitude [*'ubūdiyya*] to Him, by requiring fulfillment of the commandments and observance of the prohibitions [of the Sacred Law], submissive resignation to that which is foreordained [*maqḍūr*], and contentment [*riḍā*] with the divine decree [*qaḍā'*] in every respect, whether it be in their favor or to their disadvantage. He has appropriated the consequences and the benefits unto Himself exclusively (Almighty and Glorious is He). It is therefore necessary for the servant to be constantly engaged in worshipful obedience to his Master [*Mawlā*], to be content with whatever Allāh has allotted to him, and to harbor no doubts about Him.

As you should also be well aware, the amount of trouble experienced by any individual creature is in proportion to his quarrel with destiny [*qadar*] over that which is foreordained [*maqdūr*], his compliance with his own desire [*hawāʾ*], and his lack of contentment [*riḍā*] with the divine decree [*qadāʾ*]. Whenever someone is content to accept the divine decree, that person can enjoy rest and relaxation. Whenever someone is not content with it, on the other hand, his experience of misery and trouble can only be prolonged, and he will still obtain nothing from this world except that which has been allotted to him. As long as his personal desire persists in making its demands upon him, he cannot be content to accept the divine decree, because that desire is in contention with the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), and so his troubles can only intensify and multiply.

The procurement of ease and comfort is the result of opposition to personal desire [*hawāʾ*], because it is bound to involve contentment [*riḍā*] with the divine decree [*qadāʾ*]. The procurement of trouble and discomfort, on the other hand, is the result of compliance with personal desire, because it is bound to involve contention with the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). So may desire not be there, and if it is, let us not be!

Should contentment [*riḍā*] be classed as one of the spiritual states [*aḥwāl*], or as one of the spiritual stations [*maqāmāt*]? On this point there are differences of opinion among the qualified scholars and experts in the spiritual path [*ṭarīqa*].

According to the people of ʿIrāq, it is one of the spiritual states [*aḥwāl*]. It is not subject, they maintain, to active acquisition [*kasb*] by the servant [of the Lord]. It is rather an occurrence or visitation [*nāzila*], a condition that settles for a while within the inner feeling, like all the other spiritual states [*aḥwāl*], then changes and passes away, as another state arrives to take its place.

According to the Khurāsānīs, on the other hand, contentment [*riḍā*] is one of the spiritual stations [*maqāmāt*]. They consider it to be the final stage of absolute trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*], so that it represents the ultimate degree to which the servant [of the Lord] can attain through his own acquisitive capacity [*iktisāb*].

It is possible to reconcile these two views, by stating the case as follows:

The initial stage of contentment [*bidāyat ar-riḍā*] is subject to active acquisition [*muktasaba*] by the servant [of the Lord], which means that it is one of the spiritual stations [*maqāmāt*]. But its final stage [*niḥāya*] is one of the spiritual states [*aḥwāl*], which means that it is not subject to active acquisition.

In simple terms, someone who is content [*rāḍī*] is someone who does not object to the foreordainment [*taqḍīr*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

It was Abū ‘Alī ad-Daqqāq<sup>85</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) who said:

“Contentment [*riḍā*] does not mean that you are not affected by the experience of trial and tribulation. Contentment [*riḍā*] simply means that you do not object to the divine decision [*ḥukm*] and decree [*qaḍā’*].”

The wise elders [*mashāyikh*] (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon them) have often said:

“Contentment with the divine decree [*ar-riḍā bi’l-qaḍā’*] is Allāh’s most splendid gateway, and it is this world’s Garden of Paradise. That is to say, when someone is blessed with the honor of contentment [*riḍā*], he has already received the most abundant welcome, and has been honored with the most exalted nearness.”

It is said that a pupil [*tilmīdh*] once asked his teacher [*ustādh*]: “Is the servant aware that Allāh (Blessed and Exalted is He) is well pleased with him?” “No,” replied the teacher, “how can he know that, when His good pleasure [*riḍā*] is imperceptible?” But the pupil said: “Oh yes, he does recognize it,” so the teacher asked: “How?” The pupil then explained: “When I find that my inner feeling is well pleased with Allāh (Exalted is He), I know that He is well pleased with me.” So the teacher said: “You have done very well, young man!”

It is indeed true that the servant will not be well pleased with Allāh, unless the Lord of Truth (Glorious is His Majesty) is well pleased with him. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has told us:

Allāh is well pleased with them,	<i>raḍīya ‘llāhu ‘an-hum</i>
and they are well pleased with Him.	<i>wa raḍū ‘an-h.</i>
(58:22)	

<sup>85</sup> Abū ‘Alī ad-Daqqāq (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) was the founder of a spiritual center in Nīshāpūr, called Khānaqāh-i Sarāwī. He died in A.H. 405/1014 C.E. One of his pupils, Abu Sa‘īd ibn Abi ‘l-Khair of Maihana in Khurāsān, was a man of great saintliness who met and corresponded with the master-philosopher Avicenna [Ibn Sīnā]. Another was Abu ‘l-Qāsim al-Qushairī, the author of an important and frequently quoted treatise entitled *ar-Risālat al-Qushairīyya*.

—That is to say, because of His good pleasure [*riḍā*] with them, they are well pleased with Him.

It is said that Moses [*Mūsā*] (peace be upon him) once had a request to make of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), so he said: “My God [*Ilāhī*], point out to me a deed, such that, if I perform it, You will be well pleased with me.” The Lord said: “You are not capable of that,” so Moses (peace be upon him) sank to the ground, prostrating himself [*sājīd*] in humble submission. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) then conveyed to him by way of inspiration [*awḥā ilai-hi*]: “O son of ‘Imrān, My good pleasure resides in your contentment with My decree [*inna riḍā’ī fi riḍā-ka bi-qaḍā’ī*].”

Let us also consider the following wise sayings:

“If a person wishes to arrive at the stage of contentment [*riḍā*], let him stick to the course upon which Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has conferred His good pleasure [*riḍā*].”

“Contentment [*riḍā*] is of two kinds, namely: (1) ready approval of Him [*riḍā bi-hi*], and (2) resigned acceptance of Him [*riḍā ‘an-hu*]. There is ready approval of Him as a Manager [*Mudabbir*], and there is resigned acceptance of Him with respect to what He decrees as a Ruler [*Ḥākim*] and as a Judge [*Fāṣil*].”

“When someone is content [*rāḍī*], it means that even if Hell [*Jahannam*] were to be placed on his right side, he would not ask for it to be moved over to his left side.”

“Contentment [*riḍā*] means the expulsion of disagreeable feelings from the heart, so that nothing remains except happiness and joy.”

Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyya<sup>86</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon her) was once asked the question: “When is the servant [of the Lord] content [*rāḍī*] with the divine decree [*bi-’l-qaḍā’*]?” To this she replied (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon her): “When he is happy with affliction, just as he is happy with gracious favor.”

It is said that ash-Shiblī<sup>87</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) once uttered the expression:

There is neither any power  
nor any strength  
except with Allāh.

*lā ḥawla  
wa lā quwwata  
illā bi’ llāh.*

<sup>86</sup> See note 12 on p. 51 above.

<sup>87</sup> See note 73 on p. 136 above.

—in the presence of al-Junaid<sup>88</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him), so al-Junaid (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) told him: “In saying that, you are prompted by a feeling of annoyance, and the feeling of annoyance is due to the lack of contentment [*riḍā*] with the divine decree [*qaḍāʾ*].”

It was Abū Sulaimān [ad-Dārānī]<sup>89</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) who said:

“Contentment [*riḍā*] means that you do not ask Allāh to grant you the Garden of Paradise, and that you do not appeal to Him for refuge from the Fire of Hell.”

Dhu ’n-Nūn al-Miṣrī<sup>90</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) once said:

“These are three of the symptoms of contentment [*riḍā*]: (1) the lack of personal preference in advance of the divine decree [*qaḍāʾ*], (2) the absence of bitterness in the wake of the divine decree, and (3) the arousal of love in the midst of trial and tribulation.”

He also said (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him):

“It is the happiness of the heart with the bitterness of the divine decree [*qaḍāʾ*].”

When Abū ’Uthmān [al-Ḥīrī]<sup>91</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) was asked to explain the saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

What I ask of you is contentment [*riḍā*] in the wake of the divine decree [*qaḍāʾ*].

—he said: “That is because contentment [*riḍā*] in advance of the divine decree [*qaḍāʾ*] is only the prior determination to be content, while contentment [*riḍā*] in the wake of the divine decree [*qaḍāʾ*] is the actual experience of contentment [*huwa ’r-riḍā*].”

As we learn from a traditional report, someone once told al-Ḥusain ibn ’Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib<sup>92</sup> (may Allāh be well pleased with him and with

<sup>88</sup> See note 38 on p. 118 above.

<sup>89</sup> Abū Sulaimān ’Abd ar-Rahmān ibn Aḥmad ibn ’Aṭīyya ad-Dārānī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) was a pious devotee whose inclination lay toward extreme asceticism. He is renowned for his many memorable sayings. He died in A.H. 205 or 215.

<sup>90</sup> See note 51 on p. 123 above.

<sup>91</sup> See note 71 on p. 135 above.

<sup>92</sup> Al-Ḥusain ibn ’Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may Allāh be well pleased with him and with his father) was the grandson of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace).

his father) that Abū Dharr<sup>93</sup> (may Allāh be well pleased with him) used to say:

“Poverty is dearer to me than affluence, sickness is dearer to me than health, and death is dearer to me than life.”

So he said: “May Allāh bestow His mercy upon Abū Dharr. As for myself, I say: ‘When someone relies upon the excellence of Allāh’s choice, he does not wish for anything other than that which Allāh has chosen for him.’”

[Abū ‘Alī] al-Fuḍail ibn ‘Iyāq<sup>94</sup> once said to Bishr al-Ḥāfi [“the Barefoot”]<sup>95</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon them both):

“Contentment [*riḍā*] is more meritorious than abstinence [*zuhd*] from this world, because when someone is content [*rāḍī*], he does not wish for anything above his actual situation.”

The view expressed by al-Fuḍail is the correct one, because it refers to contentment with one’s actual condition [*ar-riḍā bi’l-ḥāl*], and all that is good resides in contentment with one’s actual condition. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) said to Moses [*Mūsā*] (peace be upon him):

“O Moses! I have preferred you above mankind by My messages and by My speaking [to you]. So hold that which I have given you, and be among the thankful.” (7:144)

*yā Mūsā  
inni ’ṣṭafaitu-ka ‘ala ’n-nāsi  
bi-risālātī wa bi-kalāmī  
fa-khudh mā ātaitu-ka  
wa kun minā ’sh-shākirīn.*

That is to say: “Be content with that which I have bestowed upon you. Do not go looking for another situation, and be among the

<sup>93</sup> Abū Dharr Jundab ibn Junādāt al-Ghifārī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) was among the earliest to embrace Islām, and he came to be one of the most distinguished of all the Companions of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace). Noted for his humility and abstinence, he was so eager to acquire knowledge that he is said to have matched even Ibn Mas‘ūd (may Allāh be well pleased with him) in religious learning. Together with Abū ‘d-Dardā’ and Abū ‘Abdi’llāh Ḥudhaifa ibn al-Yamān al-‘Abasī (may Allāh be well pleased with them both), he was one of those Companions who were called *ṣāhib sirr an-Nabī*, because of the secret knowledge imparted to them by the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace). He died in A.H. 31 or 32.

<sup>94</sup> Abū ‘Alī al-Fuḍail ibn ‘Iyāq at-Tālaqānī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) died in Mecca in A.H. 187/803 C.E. Born in Khurāsān, he is said to have been a highwayman at the beginning of his career. After his conversion he went to Kūfa, where he studied under Sufyān ath-Thawrī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) and achieved considerable repute as an authority on the Traditions of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace). He is famous for his bold preaching before the Caliph Hārūn ar-Rashīd, who called him “the Prince of the Muslims.” It is said that when he died sorrow disappeared from the world.

<sup>95</sup> See note 50 on p. 123 above.

thankful.” In other words: “Be content with making the most of your actual condition [*hifẓ al-ḥāl*].”

Likewise to our own Prophet Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace), He said (Exalted is He):

And strain not your eyes toward that	<i>wa lā tamuddanna ʿaina-ka</i>
which We have given	<i>ilā mā mattaʿnā bi-hi</i>
for some pairs among them to enjoy—	<i>azwājan min-hum</i>
the flower of this world’s life, that	<i>zahrata ʿl-ḥayāti ʿd-dunyā</i>
We may thereby put them to the test.	<i>li-naftina-hum fi-h.</i>
(20:131)	

As well as giving this instruction to His Prophet (blessing and peace be upon him), He also commanded him to make the most of his actual condition [*hifẓ al-ḥāl*], and to be content with the divine decree and bestowal of provision [*ar-riḍā biʿl-qadāʾ wa ʿl-atāʾ*], in His words (Exalted is He):

And the provision of your Lord	<i>wa rizqu Rabbi-ka</i>
is better and more lasting. (20:131)	<i>khairun wa abqā.</i>

That is to say: “That which We have bestowed upon you—in the way of Prophethood [*Nubuwwa*], knowledge [*ʿilm*], satisfaction [*qanāʿa*], patience [*ṣabr*], authority in religion [*wilāyat ad-dīn*] and the rôle of exemplar [*quḍwa*] therein—is far superior to that which We have bestowed upon anyone other than you.”

All goodness therefore resides in making the most of one’s actual condition [*hifẓ al-ḥāl*], in being content with it, and in refraining from taking an interest in any condition apart from it, because the only possibilities, as far as that [other condition] is concerned, are the following: (1) it is your own allotted portion [*qism*], (2) it is the allotted portion [*qism*] of someone other than yourself, or (3) it is not a portion [*qism*] allotted to anyone, but something that Allāh (Exalted is He) has caused to exist as a temptation [*fitna*].

If it is indeed your own allotted portion [*qism*], it is bound to come your way, whether you wish for it or not. It is therefore inappropriate for you to exhibit bad manners and greediness in its pursuit, for that would be judged unworthy by the standard of reason [*ʿaql*] and knowledge [*ʿilm*].

If it is the allotted portion [*qism*] of someone other than yourself, you must not waste your time and energy on that which you cannot obtain, and which will never come your way.

If it is not a portion [*qism*] allotted to anyone, but merely a temptation [*fitna*], how could any intelligent person be content, and how could any sensible person consider it worthwhile, to seek and attempt to procure a temptation for himself?

Certain experts on the subject have said:

“Contentment [*riḍā*] with the divine decree [*qadāʾ*] means that there is no significant distinction, as far as you are concerned, between what you like and what you dislike about His decree (Almighty and Glorious is He).”

One of them has said:

“It means patience [*ṣabr*] in enduring the bitterness of the divine decree [*qadāʾ*].”

Another has said:

“It means laying the palms of one’s hands on the ground [i.e., prostrating oneself] in the presence of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and submitting [*taslīm*] to His rulings [*aḥkām*].”

Another has said:

“It means leaving it to the Manager [*Mudabbir*] to select the best option.”

Yet another has said:

“It means giving up personal preference [*ikhtiṣār*].”

One of them has said:

“The people who really experience contentment [*ahl ar-riḍā*] are those who eradicate personal preference from their hearts. This means that they accord no special preference to any of the various things they may want for themselves, nor to any of the things by which they intend to please Allāh. They make no requests of Him, and they do not try to find out about a ruling [*ḥukm*] before it comes down [from Him]. So, when a ruling [*ḥukm*] does come down from Allāh, inasmuch as they are not eagerly awaiting it, and have not tried to learn about it in advance, they are content with it and take pleasure and delight in it.”

The same person has also said:

“Allāh has some servants who see it as a gracious favor, bestowed upon them by Allāh, when the sentence [*ḥukm*] of trial and tribulation is imposed upon them, so they thank Him for it and accept it gladly. But then they come to realize, in the wake of their delight in gracious favors,



that their preoccupation with the benefaction [*ni‘ma*], instead of with the Benefactor [*Mun‘im*], amounts to a shortcoming. Their hearts are now preoccupied with the Benefactor [*Mun‘im*], instead of with the benefaction [*ni‘ma*], and so the affliction runs its course over them, while their hearts are unaffected by it.

“Once they have settled into this spiritual station [*maqām*], and have made it their permanent residence, their Master [*Mawlā*] will transport them to a level that is even loftier for them and more elevated than that, because there is no limit and no end to His gifts (Almighty and Glorious is He).”

At the very least, contentment [*riḍā*] must mean that one ceases to yearn for anything apart from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), since Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has declared it blameworthy to yearn for anything other than Him (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Yahyā ibn Kathīr is reported as having said: “I read the Torah [*Tawrah*], and in it I saw that Allāh (Glory be to Him and Exalted is He) says:

‘Accursed is he whose reliance is placed upon a creature like himself.’”

In one of the traditions [*akhbār*], it is reported that Allāh (Glory be to Him) says:

By My Might, My Majesty, My Generosity and My Glory, I shall cut off with despair the hope of anyone who pins his hope on anything other than Me. I shall cause him to wear the garment of shame among the people. I shall banish him from My proximity, and I shall cut him off from access to Me. Will he go on pinning his hope, in the midst of adversities, on anything other than Me, when adversities are under My control, and I am the Ever-Living [*al-Ḥayy*]? Will he go on appealing to others apart from Me? Will he go on knocking with his mind at the doors of others apart from Me, when they are locked and their keys are in My hand?

In another tradition [*khabar*], it is reported that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) says:

Whenever a servant holds fast to Me, rather than to My creation, that fact becomes known from his heart and his intention [*niyya*], so the heavens and the earth and all within them conspire to bring about his downfall, but I provide him with a means of escape therefrom. And whenever a servant clings to a created entity, rather than to Me, I cut away the cords of heaven from above him, and I turn the earth into a swamp beneath his feet. Then I bring him to ruination in this world, and I make him suffer misery therein.

One of the Companions [*Ṣahāba*] (may the good pleasure [*riḍwān*] of Allāh the Exalted be upon them all) is reported as having said: “I once heard Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) say:

“If someone takes pride in human beings, he deserves to be treated with contempt.”

In the words of another wise saying:

“If a person relies upon a creature like himself, he deserves to be treated with contempt. Because of his ambitious desire [*ṭamaʿ*] to get whatever he wants, he is prevented from consulting his inner feeling, distracted from his true aspiration, and exposed to degradation and abasement. Two things are therefore stacked against him, namely, humiliation in this world and remoteness from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), without the addition of one single atom to increase his sustenance.”

One of the experts had this to say:

“I know of nothing more harmful to spiritual aspirants [*murīdīn*] and seekers [*ṭālibīn*] than ambitious desire [*ṭamaʿ*]. I know of nothing more detrimental to their hearts, nothing more likely to make them suffer degradation, nothing more injurious to their inner feelings, nothing more likely to keep them far removed from their goal, and nothing more serious as a distraction from their true aspiration.

“As for why this is so, the reason is simply that it amounts to a form of polytheism [*shirk*], wherever they may be, because one of them has attributed a partner to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), inasmuch as he has focused his ambitious desire [*ṭamaʿ*] on a creature like himself, who is powerless to cause any harm or provide any benefit, and incapable of giving or withholding any gift. He has thereby assigned the power of the King [*Malik*] to His slave [*mamlūk*]. So what of his claim to piety [*waraʿ*]? His claim to piety will not be recognized as genuine, until he attributes all things to their Owner [*Mālik*] (Almighty and Glorious is He), then seeks to obtain them from Him, and does not seek to obtain them from anyone other than Him.”

As someone else has explained:

“Ambitious desire [*ṭamaʿ*] has a root and a branch. The root of it is heedless neglect, while its branch consists of hypocritical ostentation [*riyāʿ*], promoting an undeserved reputation [*sumʿa*], pretense and affectation, and a fondness for acquiring prestige in the eyes of the public.”

Jesus [‘*Īsā*] (peace be upon him) once said to the Disciples [*Hawāriyyīn*]:<sup>96</sup> “Ambitious desire [*ṭama’*] is the deadly enemy of inspiration [*wahy*].”

One of the experts on this subject is reported as having said:

“It happened one day that I felt a strong desire for something belonging to this world, but then an invisible voice [*hātif*] called out to me, saying: ‘O you there! Since the free man with spiritual aspirations [*al-ḥurr al-murīd*] can find whatever he seeks in the presence of Allāh, it ill befits him to depend in his heart upon servile creatures [‘*abīd*].’”

You should also know that Allāh has certain servants [‘*ibād*] who are unconscious of the fact that ambition must be focused on the One who has the power to grant what they desire, until they receive the blessing of grace [*baraka*] from an unexpected source. Only then do they realize that the state of ambitious desire [*ṭama’*] is a defective condition among the spiritual states [*aḥwāl*]. It is a lower degree than all the degrees attained by those, among the people of absolute trust in the Lord, whose knowledge is based on direct experience [*al-‘arīfīn min ahl at-tawakkul*].

No trace of ambitious desire [*ṭama’*] can enter and settle in the heart of the spiritual aspirant [*murīd*], unless it be on account of total remoteness from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), due to his having focused his ambition on a creature like himself, and because fear has not deterred him from doing so, even though he is well aware that his Master [*Mawlā*] knows absolutely everything about him.



<sup>96</sup> See Vol. 1, note 62, p. 83.

## 6. Concerning truthfulness [*ṣidq*].

As for truthfulness [*ṣidq*], the basic guidance on the subject is contained in the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

<p>O you who believe, be careful of your duty to Allāh, and be with the truthful. (9:119)</p>	<p><i>yā ayyuha 'lladhīna āmanu 'ttaqu 'llāha wa kūnū ma'a 'ṣ-ṣādiqīn.</i></p>
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—and in the traditional report, transmitted on the authority of ‘Abdu’llāh ibn Mas‘ūd<sup>97</sup> (may Allāh be well pleased with him), who stated that the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

When the servant [of the Lord] never ceases to tell the truth, and makes truthfulness [*ṣidq*] his constant pursuit, he is eventually recorded in the sight of Allāh as a champion of truth [*ṣiddīq*]. But when he never ceases to tell lies, and makes falsehood [*kidhb*] his constant pursuit, he is eventually recorded in the sight of Allāh as a professional liar [*kadhhab*].

It is said that Allāh told David (peace be upon him), by way of inspiration:

O David, if someone confirms the truth of My word [*ṣaddaqa-nī*] in the privacy of his conscience [*sarīra*], I will confirm the truth of his word [*ṣaddaqtu-hu*] in the opinion of the creatures in his public life.

You must know and understand that truthfulness [*ṣidq*] is the mainstay of the business [*imād al-amr*], the means by which it is brought to completion [*tamām*], and by which it is kept in good order [*niẓām*]. It ranks second only to Prophethood [*Nubuwwa*], as we know from the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

<p>And whoever obeys Allāh and the Messenger, they are in the company of those to whom Allāh has granted gracious favor—the Prophets, the champions of truth, the martyrs and the righteous—and the best of company are they!” (4:69)</p>	<p><i>wa man yuṭī 'i 'llāha wa 'r-rasūla fa-ulā'ika ma'a 'lladhīna an'amta 'alai-him mina 'n-nabiyyīna wa 'ṣ-ṣiddīqīna wa 'sh-shuhadā'i wa 'ṣ-ṣāliḥīn: wa ḥasuna ulā'ika rafiqā.</i></p>
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<sup>97</sup> See note 30 on p. 114 above.

The word *ṣādiq* [truthful] is the simple adjective corresponding to the noun *ṣidq* [truthfulness], while the term *ṣiddīq* [champion of truth] is a more intensive form. The *ṣiddīq* is someone who makes such a constant practice of *ṣidq*, that it comes to be his regular habit and his natural disposition, and truthfulness [*ṣidq*] becomes the predominant aspect of his character.

Truthfulness [*ṣidq*] means that no distinction is made between what is believed in private and what is professed in public. The person who is simply truthful [*ṣādiq*] is therefore someone who tells the truth in his verbal statements [*ṣadaqa fi aqwāli-hi*], while the champion of truth [*ṣiddīq*] is someone who tells the truth not only in his verbal statements, but also in all his actions and states of being [*ṣadaqa fi aqwāli-hi wa jamī‘i af ‘āli-hi wa aḥwāli-hi*].

In the words of one the wise:

“If anyone wishes for Allāh to be with him, he had better make truthfulness [*ṣidq*] his constant practice, for Allāh is with those who are truthful [*fa-inna ‘llāha ma‘a ‘ṣ-ṣādiqīn*].”

It was al-Junaid<sup>98</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) who said:

“The truthful person [*ṣādiq*] experiences spiritual transformation [*yanqalibu*] forty times a day, while the hypocrite [*murā‘ī*] remains stuck in one and the same state of being for forty years.”

Let us also consider the following wise sayings:

“Truthfulness [*ṣidq*] means speaking the truth [*al-qawl bi’l-ḥaqq*], even in situations of grave danger.”

“Truthfulness [*ṣidq*] means ensuring the mutual consistency of private belief and public statement.”

“Truthfulness [*ṣidq*] means keeping that which is unlawful [*ḥarām*] from lodging in the corner of one’s mouth.”

“Truthfulness [*ṣidq*] means putting one’s loyal commitment to Allāh into active practice.”

Sahl ibn ‘Abdi’llāh [at-Tustarī]<sup>99</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) once said:

“The fragrant aroma of truthfulness [*ṣidq*] cannot be detected in the presence of someone who applies the oil of hypocritical flattery [*dāhin*] to himself or to other people.”

<sup>98</sup> See note 38 on p. 118 above.

<sup>99</sup> See note 32 on p. 116 above.

It was Abū Sa‘īd al-Qurashī (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) who said:

“The truthful person [*ṣādiq*] is someone who is fully prepared to die, and who would not be embarrassed by any secret of his, if it happened to be disclosed. Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

Then long for death,  
if you are truthful folk! (2:94)<sup>100</sup>

*fa-tamannawu ‘l-mawta*  
*in kuntum ṣādiqīn.*

These sayings also deserve to be quoted:

“Truthfulness [*ṣidq*] means genuineness in the affirmation of Divine Unity [*ṣiḥḥat at-tawḥīd*], together with the sense of purpose [*qaṣd*].”

“The real meaning of truthfulness [*ḥaqīqat aṣ-ṣidq*] is that you would always tell the truth, even in a situation of deadly peril, from which nothing but lying could save you.”

“Three things are never lacking in the truthful person [*ṣādiq*], namely: (1) graceful charm [*ḥalāwa*], (2) dignity [*ḥaiba*], and (3) a lively sense of humor [*malāḥal*].”

Dhu ‘n-Nūn al-Miṣrī<sup>101</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) once said:

“Truthfulness [*ṣidq*] is the sword of Allāh; it cuts through anything upon which it is brought to bear.”

It was Sahl ibn ‘Abdīllāh [at-Tustarī]<sup>102</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) who said:

“The principal offense of the champions of truth [*ṣiddīqīn*] is the one they commit by conversing only with their fellows.”<sup>103</sup>

Fatḥ al-Mawṣilī (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) was once asked to explain the meaning of truthfulness [*ṣidq*]. By way of response, he stuck his hand into the blacksmith’s brazier, pulled out a piece of iron, which was being heated in the fire, and placed it on the palm of his hand until it cooled. “This,” he said, “is truthfulness [*ṣidq*].”

When someone asked al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī<sup>104</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) to describe the distinguishing mark of truthfulness [*ṣidq*], he said:

<sup>100</sup> These words of Allāh (Exalted is He) occur in Q. 2:94 and 62:6.

<sup>101</sup> See note 51 on p. 123 above.

<sup>102</sup> See note 32 on p. 116 above.

<sup>103</sup> This saying calls to mind the English idiom: “preaching to the converted.”

<sup>104</sup> See note 50 on p. 123 above.

“The truthful person [*ṣādiq*] is someone who would not mind, because of the goodness of his own heart, if every one of his faculties moved out into the hearts of his fellow creatures. He does not like other people to notice all the minute details of his good work, but he does not object to their noticing what he does badly. If he did object to that, it would indicate that he would like them to regard him with excessive admiration, and this is not in keeping with the moral standards of the champions of truth [*akhlāq aṣ-ṣiddīqīn*].”

One of the wise once said: “If someone does not perform the permanent religious duty [*al-farḍ ad-dā’im*], his performance of the temporary religious duty [*al-farḍ al-mu’aqqat*] will not be accepted of him.” When asked to explain what he meant by the permanent religious duty, he said: “Truthfulness [*ṣidq*].”

Let us give the last word to the wise man who said:

“If you seek Allāh by means of truthfulness [*ṣidq*], He will give you a looking glass, a mirror in which you will see every detail of the marvels and wonders of this world and the Hereafter.”

\* \* \* \* \*

This brings us to the end of  
Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth  
[*al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Haqq*]

Praise be to Allāh, the Lord of All the Worlds!  
[*al-ḥamdu li’llāhi Rabbi ’l-’ālamīn*].



# Concerning the Author, Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī

A Brief Introduction by the Translator<sup>1</sup>

## The Author’s Names and Titles

A rich store of information about the author of *Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth* is conveniently available, to those familiar with the religious and spiritual tradition of Islām, in his names, his surnames, and the many titles conferred upon him by his devoted followers. It is not unusual for these to take up several lines in an Arabic manuscript, but let us start with the short form of the author’s name as it appears on the cover and title page of this book: *Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī*.

**Shaikh:** A term applied throughout the Islamic world to respected persons of recognized seniority in learning, experience and wisdom. Its basic meaning in Arabic is “an elder; a man over fifty years of age.” (The spellings *Sheikh* and *Shaykh* may also be encountered in English-language publications.)

**‘Abd al-Qādir:** This is the author’s personal name, meaning “Servant [or Slave] of the All-Powerful.” (The form *‘Abdul Qādir*, which the reader may come across elsewhere, is simply an alternative transliteration of the Arabic spelling.) It has always been a common practice, in the Muslim community, to give a male child a name in which ‘Abd is prefixed to one of the Names of Allāh.

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced for the convenience of the reader, with slight modifications from the version printed on pp. xiii-xix of: Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir. *Revelations of the Unseen (Futūḥ al-Ghaib)*. Translated from the Arabic by Muhtar Holland. Houston, Texas: Al-Baz Publishing, Inc., 1992.



**al-Jilānī:** A surname ending in *-ī* will often indicate the bearer's place of birth. Shaikh ʿAbd al-Qādir was born in the Iranian district of Gīlān, south of the Caspian Sea, in A.H. 470/1077-8 C.E. (In some texts, the Persian spelling *Gīlānī* is used instead of the arabicized form *al-Jīlānī*. The abbreviated form *al-Jīlī*, which may also be encountered, should not be confused with the surname of the venerable ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, author of the celebrated work *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, who came from Jīl in the district of Baghdād.)

Let us now consider a slightly longer version of the Shaikh's name, as it occurs near the beginning of *Al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī* [*The Sublime Revelation*]: *Sayyidunā 'sh-Shaikh Muḥyi' d-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir (Raḍiya'llāhu 'anh)*.

**Sayyidunā 'sh-Shaikh:** "Our Master, the Shaikh." A writer who regards himself as a Qādirī, a devoted follower of Shaikh ʿAbd al-Qādir, will generally refer to the latter as *Sayyidunā* [our Master], or *Sayyidī* [my Master].

**Muḥyi' d-Dīn:** "Reviver of the Religion." It is widely acknowledged by historians, non-Muslim as well as Muslim, that Shaikh ʿAbd al-Qādir displayed great courage in reaffirming the traditional teachings of Islām, in an era when sectarianism was rife, and when materialistic and rationalistic tendencies were predominant in all sections of society. In matters of Islamic jurisprudence [*fiqh*] and theology [*kalām*], he adhered quite strictly to the highly "orthodox" school of Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal.

**Abū Muḥammad:** "Father of Muḥammad." In the Arabic system of nomenclature, a man's surnames usually include the name of his first-born son, with the prefix *Abū* [Father of—].

**Raḍiya'llāhu 'anh:** "May Allāh be well pleased with him!" This benediction is the one customarily pronounced—and spelled out in writing—after mentioning the name of a Companion of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace). The preference for this particular invocation is yet another mark of the extraordinary status held by Shaikh ʿAbd al-Qādir in the eyes of his devoted followers.

Finally, we must note some important elements contained within this even longer version: *al-Ghawth al-A‘zam Sulṭān al-Awliyā’ Sayyidunā ‘sh-Shaikh Muḥyi’-d-Dīn ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī al-Ḥasanī al-Ḥusainī (Raḍiya’llāhu ‘anh)*.

***al-Ghawth al-A‘zam***: “The Supreme Helper” (or, “The Mightiest Succor”). *Ghawth* is an Arabic word meaning: (1) A cry for aid or succor. (2) Aid, help, succor; deliverance from adversity. (3) The chief of the Saints, who is empowered by Allāh to bring succor to suffering humanity, in response to His creatures’ cry for help in times of extreme adversity.

***Sulṭān al-Awliyā’***: “The Sultan of the Saints.” This reinforces the preceding title, emphasizing the supremacy of the *Ghawth* above all other orders of sanctity.

***al-Ḥasanī al-Ḥusainī***: “The descendant of both al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusain, the grandsons of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace).” To quote the Turkish author, Shaikh Muzaffer Ozak Efendi (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him): “The lineage of Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir is known as the Chain of Gold, since both his parents were descendants of the Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace). His noble father, ‘Abdullāh, traced his descent by way of Imām Ḥasan, while his revered mother, Umm al-Khair, traced hers through Imām Ḥusain.”

As for the many other surnames, titles and honorific appellations that have been conferred upon Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, it may suffice at this point to mention *al-Bāḡ al-Ashhab* [The Gray Falcon].

### The Author’s Life in Baghdād

Through the mists of legend surrounding the life of Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, it is possible to discern the outlines of the following biographical sketch:

In A.H. 488, at the age of eighteen, he left his native province to become a student in the great capital city of Baghdād, the hub of political, commercial and cultural activity, and the center of religious learning in

the world of Islām. After studying traditional sciences under such teachers as the prominent Ḥanbalī jurist [*faqīh*], Abū Sa‘d ‘Alī al-Mukharrimī, he encountered a more spiritually oriented instructor in the saintly person of Abu’l-Khair Ḥammād ad-Dabbās. Then, instead of embarking on his own professorial career, he abandoned the city and spent twenty-five years as a wanderer in the desert regions of ‘Irāq.

He was over fifty years old by the time he returned to Baghdād, in A.H. 521/1127 C.E., and began to preach in public. His hearers were profoundly affected by the style and content of his lectures, and his reputation grew and spread through all sections of society. He moved into the school [*madrasa*] belonging to his old teacher al-Mukharrimī, but the premises eventually proved inadequate. In A.H. 528, pious donations were applied to the construction of a residence and guesthouse [*ribāṭ*], capable of housing the Shaikh and his large family, as well as providing accommodation for his pupils and space for those who came from far and wide to attend his regular sessions [*majālis*].

He lived to a ripe old age, and continued his work until his very last breath, as we know from the accounts of his final moments recorded in the Addendum to Revelations of the Unseen.

In the words of Shaikh Muzaffer Ozak Efendi: “The venerable ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī passed on to the Realm of Divine Beauty in A.H. 561/1166 C.E., and his blessed mausoleum in Baghdād is still a place of pious visitation. He is noted for his extraordinary spiritual experiences and exploits, as well as his memorable sayings and wise teachings. It is rightly said of him that ‘he was born in love, grew in perfection, and met his Lord in the perfection of love.’ May the All-Glorious Lord bring us in contact with his lofty spiritual influence!”

### **The Author’s Literary Works**

***Al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī* [The Sublime Revelation].** A collection of sixty-two discourses delivered by Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir in the years A.H. 545-546/1150-1152 C.E. Arabic text published by Dār al-Albāb, Damascus,

n.d. Arabic text with Urdu translation: Madīna Publishing Co., Karachi, 1989. Translated from the Arabic by Muhtar Holland. Houston, Texas: Al-Baz Publishing, Inc., 1992.

Even a non-Muslim scholar like D.S. Margoliouth was so favorably impressed by the content and style of *Al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī* that he wrote:<sup>2</sup> “The sermons included in [this work] are some of the very best in Muslim literature: the spirit which they breathe is one of charity and philanthropy: the preacher would like to ‘close the gates of Hell and open those of Paradise to all mankind.’ He employs Ṣūfī technicalities very rarely, and none that would occasion the ordinary reader much difficulty....”

**Malfūzāt [Utterances].** A loosely organized compilation of talks and sayings by Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir, almost equal in total length to Revelations of the Unseen. Frequently treated as a kind of appendix or supplement to manuscript and printed versions of *Al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī*. Translated from the Arabic by Muhtar Holland. Houston, Texas: Al-Baz Publishing, Inc., 1992.

**Futūḥ al-Ghaib [Revelations of the Unseen].** A collection of seventy-eight discourses. The Arabic text, edited by Muḥammad Sālim al-Bawwāb, has been published by Dār al-Albāb, Damascus, 1986. German translation: W. Braune. *Die Futūḥ al-Gaib des ‘Abd al-Qādir*. Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1933. English translations: (1) M. Aftab-ud-Din Ahmad. *Futuh Al-Ghaib [The Revelations of the Unseen]*. Lahore, Pakistan: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf. Repr. 1986. (2) Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. *Revelations of the Unseen (Futūḥ al-Ghaib)*. Translated from the Arabic by Muhtar Holland. Houston, Texas: Al-Baz Publishing, Inc., 1992.

**Jalā’ al-Khawāṭir [The Removal of Cares].** A collection of forty-five discourses by Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir. Arabic text with Urdu translation published by Maktaba Nabawiyya, Lahore, n.d. Translated from the Arabic by Muhtar Holland. Ft. Lauderdale, Florida: Al-Baz Publishing, Inc., 1997.

<sup>2</sup> In his article “‘Abd al-Qādir” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (also printed in *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1961).

***Sirr al-Asrār* [The Secret of Secrets].** A short work, divided into twenty-four chapters, in which “the realities within our faith and our path are divulged.” English translation: *The Secret of Secrets* by Ḥaḍrat ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, interpreted by Shaykh Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti. Cambridge, England: The Islamic Texts Society, 1992.

***Al-Ḡhunya li-ṭālibī ṭarīq al-ḥaqq* [Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth].** Arabic text published in two parts by Dār al-Albāb, Damascus, n.d., 192 pp. + 200 pp. Translated from the Arabic (in 5 vols.) by Muhtar Holland. Hollywood, Florida: Al-Baz Publishing, Inc., 1997.

Other works attributed to Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir include short treatises on some of the Divine Names; litanies [*awrād/aḥzāb*]; prayers and supplications [*da‘awāt/munājāt*]; mystical poems [*qaṣā’id*].

May Allāh forgive our mistakes and failings, and may He bestow His blessings upon all connected with our project—especially our gracious readers! Āmīn.

Muhtar Holland

## About the Translator

Muhtar Holland was born in 1935, in the ancient city of Durham in the North East of England. This statement may be considered anachronistic, however, since he did not bear the name Muhtar until 1969, when he was moved—by powerful experiences in the *latihan kejiwaan* of Subud—to embrace the religion of Islām.\*

At the age of four, according to an entry in his father’s diary, he said to a man who asked his name: “I’m a stranger to myself.” During his years at school, he was drawn most strongly to the study of languages, which seemed to offer signposts to guide the stranger on his “Journey Home,” apart from their practical usefulness to one who loved to spend his vacations traveling—at first on a bicycle—through foreign lands. Serious courses in Latin, Greek, French, Spanish and Danish, with additional smatterings of Anglo-Saxon, Italian, German and Dutch. Travels in France, Germany, Belgium, Holland and Denmark. Then a State Scholarship and up to Balliol College, Oxford, for a degree course centered on the study of Arabic and Turkish. Travels in Turkey and Syria. Then National Service in the Royal Navy, with most of the two years spent on an intensive course in the Russian language.

In the years since graduation from Oxford and Her Majesty’s Senior Service, Mr. Holland has held academic posts at the University of Toronto, Canada; at the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London, England (with a five-month leave to study Islamic Law in Cairo, Egypt); and at the Universiti Kebangsaan in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (followed by a six-month sojourn in Indonesia). He also worked as Senior Research Fellow at the Islamic Foundation in Leicester, England, and as Director of the Nūr al-Islām Translation Center in Valley Cottage, New York.

\* The name Muhtar was received at that time from Bapak Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, of Wisma Subud, Jakarta, in response to a request for a suitable Muslim name. In strict academic transliteration from the Arabic, the spelling would be *Mukhtār*. The form *Mughtar* is probably more common in Indonesia than *Muhtar*, which happens to coincide with the modern Turkish spelling of the name.

His freelance activities have mostly been devoted to writing and translating in various parts of the world, including Scotland and California. He made his Pilgrimage [*Hajj*] to Mecca in 1980.

Published works include the following:

Al-Ghazālī. *On the Duties of Brotherhood*. Translated from the Classical Arabic by Muhtar Holland. London: Latimer New Dimensions, 1975. New York: Overlook Press, 1977. Repr. 1980 and 1993.

Sheikh Muzaffer Ozak al-Jerrahi. *The Unveiling of Love*. Translated from the Turkish by Muhtar Holland. New York: Inner Traditions, 1981. Westport, Ct.: Pir Publications, 1990.

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